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MOUNT AND MAN

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A TYPICAL HUNTING SCENE.

Frontispiece.

MOUNT AND MAN

A KEY TO BETTER HORSEMANSHIP

By

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LATE 5TH R. I. LANCERS

With a Foreword by

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PLATES BY LIONEL EDWARDS

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**I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO ALL THOSE
WHOSE HORSES ENJOY BEING RIDDEN
BY THEM**

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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

IN writing this Preface to the Third Edition of "Mount and Man," I find I have very little to add to my former Prefaces.

I have therefore substituted only a sentence here and there to bring it up to date.

It is, however, a great pleasure to me that a third edition is called for, because it proves how much interest has been taken in the subject of modern horsemanship.

People are realizing more and more that the old-fashioned ways of riding are disappointing, and feel the need for change. In going through the second edition in preparation for this one, I realize how much opinions have advanced since "Mount and Man" was first published.

Riding has become much more prevalent, and Pony Clubs are doing a great deal for the younger generation, and with this a demand for instruction on scientific lines grows.

Gone are the days when people were told that experience was the best instructor, and grip the only aid.

Now we realize the advantage of balance, and that much study is wanted, both by the instructor as well as the pupil, in order to turn out an efficient horseman.

More and more do we feel that we have much to learn from the Continent.

The Italians have taught the world how to jump, the French and the Hungarians show us how to school. The Austrians have their Spanische Hof Reit-Schule, and we in England have our steeple-chasing and hunting.

The various branches of riding should not be viewed separately,

as if they were in water-tight compartments, but should each contribute to a complete whole. The more we study the art of riding the more we understand how all the different parts fit together. The steeplechase jockey would be all the better if he studied *haute école*, the high-school rider would be improved with steeplechasing, and the hunting man with a course of show jumping. We all can learn from each other.

In these pages I have attempted to give the best tips from all countries, in the hope that I may have contributed a little bit to my long-cherished wish to make Englishmen the finest riders and horse-masters in the world.

I now want to express my appreciation of the very many kind and encouraging letters which I have received from every corner of the world, and especially from America, where the "forward" seat has been the customary form of riding for many years.

At the same time, the views expressed in this book have met with occasional opposition in the Press and in private correspondence which I have received. While I expected a certain measure of this opposition—for there have always been those who have resolutely opposed the theories I have endeavoured to advocate—I cannot help feeling that much of this opposition would not have been made if I had been able to express myself a little more clearly. I think that all those who have studied the art of riding are really in agreement as to essentials, but there are so many points of lesser account which can hardly be dealt with in any one book, especially one that is written for popular reading, that I welcome this opportunity of meeting a few of the principal arguments that have been raised during the past few years.

The salient feature of the "backseat" party's contentions (I hope they will excuse the use of this expression) is that they are apparently quite satisfied with things as they are; they suggest no way to improve, and see no reason for improvement.

Personally I take a very different view. I feel that we all can improve, and that there are strong reasons for wishing to do so. I support this opinion by referring my readers to photographs

published in the Press of hunting, racing, and show-ring riders jumping their respective fences. Scarcely a day passes without seeing examples which emphasize this point of view.

It is also a matter of surprise to me that in this sporting country there should be so much opposition to principles which have been adopted in every other country for many years. Unless we can bring ourselves to believe that we can learn from others, and unless we can, by close inspection, become convinced that our own personal riding is not as good as it might be, and that awkward positions are not always the fault of the horse, then there is little hope for us.

Personally I have felt the need for self-improvement all my life, and whenever any bungle occurs, I always think it over carefully, try to sift the cause, and by reading, observation, and interrogation of people of many nationalities, I have come to the conclusions which take form in this book.

My one desire is to express myself here in such a manner that my principles will be as clear and convincing to others as they are to myself.

Most people assert that they will have nothing to do with the "forward" or "balanced" seat, having an invincible prejudice in favour of their own methods, but I can congratulate myself on the fact that I nearly always find my most bitter opponents are those who have not understood, and sometimes have not even tried to understand, these methods of riding.

It is said that this seat may be all very well for the show ring, but it is useless over a natural country, especially when hounds are running. What the actual difference is in jumping, when hounds run and when they do not, is a point which is rather beyond me. Some people say that show jumping is to be ignored, that it has no practical value, because out hunting every conceivable kind of fence is met with, except the obstacles of the show ring. Let us for a moment consider how far these statements will stand examination.

In a show ring, and more especially in those on the Continent

(they are far ahead of us in this respect), we meet with a variety of fences, amongst which are a gate, a wall, a stile, a post and rails, a lane, a brush fence, a bank, etc., which, although some are painted white and have wings, do, at least, represent obstacles of which parallels can be, and are, met with in the hunting field.

Many riders contend that it is probably wrong to sit back over these obstacles in the show ring, but right to jump them in this manner out hunting. The only reason given for this somewhat surprising point of view is that in the ring the horse lands upon a prepared surface, but that out hunting the ground may be rough and the horse might "peck"—suggesting, of course, that if a "peck" takes place in a show, the rider must fall off, in spite of many examples where the accomplished rider can be seen to collect his horse and to continue the course as if nothing had happened.

They maintain that a show jumper is a bad hunter, but if a horse has been properly schooled to jump timber of 4 feet 9 inches or 5 feet high with certainty and control I should feel fairly confident in jumping a 3-foot rail on him out hunting. But, they say, it is of no use schooling a horse over plain timber in a paddock because that would be a show-ring jump, and the training would be valueless.

I do not think it necessary to dwell further upon this point. I can only say that the more a horse is schooled to jump over fences (however artificial) upon the lines I advocate in this book, the better and safer hunter he will be, and the rider need not change his methods whether he schools or hunts.

The view that it is necessary to sit back in order to save the horse's legs when landing over a fence will cause my friends in America and on the Continent much amusement.

In those countries they all ride and race and hunt over stiff fences with the "forward" or "balanced" seat, and the idea of breaking horses down from this cause is one to which I am sure they would never agree. I will go further, and say I am convinced this method of riding is worth a stone in weight.*

* See Plate XI. Here I ask whether, on examination of this picture, it is possible to maintain that the horse's forelegs are being saved by such means.

Another criticism I have received is that "it serves no useful purpose to set down rules." This is, perhaps, the most surprising criticism of all. No rules! Everyone must ride according to his own make and shape and fancy! It is views such as these that produce the astonishing variety of seats we see. Surely we must have standards to guide us, and ideals to attain.

I have been taken to task for quoting the railway train as an example of balance on the move. My critics say that as you must lean forward as the train advances in speed, so you must lean back when it begins to stop. Therefore, they say, this is proof positive that as the horse lands over a fence the body must go back.

The example I take of a train moving on rails is to visualize a particular dynamic situation of increase of speed. But if we wish to discuss the "land" then we must take the gymnasium floor as our model. Because a horse doesn't stop like a train when landing. When we are asked to jump, we are told to alight on the toes and bend the knees, which can only be done by having the body nicely balanced (or forward). We would indeed be surprised if our instructor told us to lean back as we landed.

I am also told that the horse is considerably hampered by having the weight of the rider forward, when he attempts to right himself after a "peck." This point of view is the direct opposite to my own observation and experience. I can best reply by asking my readers, especially those who have been in the infantry, to imagine themselves jumping across a brook with a pack on their backs. Would they prefer to have the pack well up on the shoulders or down on their loins, especially if they had slipped on landing?

I have also been told it is bad teaching and bad riding to steady oneself, when in trouble, by placing the hands on the horse's neck. This is also a surprising view. In such a position we do, at least, give the horse a free head and a free loin, and it is infinitely better than hanging on to his mouth, which, I am sorry to say, the "back-seat" riders very frequently do when difficulties arise.

Then there is a school of thought which says the body should be vertical throughout the leap—that is to say, "as the horse rises

at a jump the rider's chest will have to approach the horse's neck, and during the descent on landing his shoulders will have to approach the horse's loins." This may sound all right, but every photograph of a good jump displays the rider in any position rather than vertical, and the continuance of this belief in the verticality of the body in the face of photography is remarkable.

One of the same school maintains that the back should be *neither hollowed nor rounded*. This is a feat I find myself unable to perform at any time, still less in the saddle, and I do not think the remark can be taken exactly as expressed.

Many horsemen disagree with the view that to be balanced one must be balanced from the foot. I should not have thought there could be two opinions on this point. This is a rule I can remember from my earliest days, and, as far as I know, it is and must be one of those fundamental rules which never can change. If this is so, then we must ask ourselves how can the leathers be kept taut unless the weight of the body is upon the foot?

In my advocacy for keeping the back part of the saddle as free as possible I think I must have been misunderstood. In order to get a truly balanced position in the saddle at the standstill and walk, the seat bones should rest in the dip of the saddle, leaving quite a hand's width between the back of the body and the end of the saddle. It is a point, however, which can be demonstrated better than described, but it is a useful rule and well worth acceptance, as, in that position, the rider has much more power and control.

Another surprising statement has been made to me in connection with my chapter on "Riding for Old and Young." I am told that "people who only start riding at eighteen and upwards never acquire a really good seat, or, indeed, the other essentials for fine horsemanship!" In that case our cavalry must be in a bad way, because our recruits are almost entirely composed of raw beginners. But I take comfort, because another critic tells me that Weedon produces magnificent horsemen.

I was myself brought up entirely on the old principles, which I studied and practised with the same zeal that I practise other

methods to-day. I changed because I found that when put into careful practice there was in my opinion no question as to which was the right way.

When this method has been adopted, it will be found that there is only one way to ride, whether it be in the show ring, the hunting field, the steeplechase or the *manège*, and that is "balanced." It applies to all and every form of equestrianism. It varies only in degree.

I am sometimes asked whether it could possibly be right to sit forward landing over Becher's Brook in the National at Aintree. My answer is this. Supposing the horse took off properly, about 8 feet away, and landed about 15 feet the other side, and that the rider was correctly placed and was uninterfered with, in my opinion he would find it an easy matter to be forward all the time; but if any of these points were absent he would have to adjust his body immediately to the circumstances of the moment, and might find himself forced to lean back. As the perfect leap in steeplechase does not occur at every fence, so must the rider make those immediate adjustments which are a necessity for good horsemanship.

It will be noticed that I have added three new chapters, apart from a good deal of new material incorporated in the original chapters. I would draw particular attention to the chapter on "Flexion." It is an important subject, and its study and practice adds to the pleasure and safety of riding. It has been developed in France, and on the Continent generally, to a high pitch of excellence, but hunting people in England have seldom the time for or opportunity of studying this branch of equitation, or of schooling their horses to such an extent. Generally speaking, "flexion" means control, and control means safety. Flexion is the result of good mouthing, and most horses have nice mouths if we know how to handle them.

At the end of the book I have given in brief form some of the "aids" which may prove useful to those riders who have not the advantage of "school" training.

It will be remarked that I have supported my opinion with a number of quotations from writers of all ages, as I am particularly anxious to show that the rules I advocate are not the result of new theories, but have been held by the best exponents of horsemanship for many thousands of years. Xenophon, indeed, who lived more than two thousand years ago, must have been well ahead of his time, for if he were alive to-day he would be marching with our foremost thinkers.

It is nearly twenty years since I realized from Lalanne, the great French instructor, that in jumping particularly, and in all riding generally, grip is subservient to balance.

While I am mentioning authorities, let me take the opportunity of making acknowledgment to the Italian school. I cannot do better than refer to a letter received from Signor Theodolig, late Fifth Lancers, Italian Cavalry, from which I have much pleasure in quoting the following extracts :

“I may perhaps be forgiven if I appeal to your sporting and fair sense and make a suggestion.

“It seems to me that in explaining so well, praising and advocating the system, in the absence of a better and more comprehensive term known as the ‘forward’ seat, it would have been not only fair, but very interesting to say a few words as to its origin.

“The system saw the light between 1896 and 1898 in Italy, at Pinerola and Tor di Quinto, the two seats of our cavalry school, thanks to the equestrian genius of Captain Caprilli.

“His method, based on common sense and direct observation, was styled by him, and known in Italy as ‘natural equitation,’ because one of its fundamental principles requires the rider to allow the horse to use his limbs, balance himself, etc., as nature prompts him to, without the least interference, direct or indirect, from the man on his back.

“In 1901 Captain Caprilli’s system, still only practised by himself, won the day by the all-powerful argument of success in Turin.

“ Soon after that it was officially introduced into the cavalry school, and in due course led to the extraordinary success that attended the Italian team at Olympia in 1908.

“ Those results were, of course, at once attacked and minimised by British Conservatism, who promptly defined it as trick-riding, circus stunts, etc. . . .

“ I feel it is a pity that you did not find a single word to say as to the origin of the system, and not even mentioned the late Captain Caprilli, who died in the saddle, and whose name ought to have at least as prominent a place as Baucher's, la Guerinière's or Fillis's. . . .”

In summing up, I must again refer to the fact that the criticisms are usually made by those who have not tried the “ forward ” seat, and I reply by saying that I have tried both.

I gratefully acknowledge the splendid work Captain Caprilli has done for riding, which puts all horsemen in his debt. I myself began elaborating this system of riding in the year 1901. Although I did not hear of Captain Caprilli till years afterwards, curiously enough we both came to almost identical conclusions.

FOREWORD

LIEUT.-COLONEL McTAGGART tells us that, in this book, his endeavour has been to present the chief difficulties of riding in as simple a manner as possible, and I think that all who turn the pages will agree that he has admirably succeeded.

No one could have better qualifications for such a task than has Lieut.-Colonel McTaggart, well known as an accomplished horseman and horsemaster, with wide and varied experience, expert in the theory and the practice of equitation; he possesses, moreover, the gifts of patience and kindness, in virtue of which he can be not merely the master but the friend of his horse.

The note of sympathy between mount and man is recognisable in all he writes.

The art of riding has notably advanced during the last two or three decades; and the rough methods of the old riding schools, under which man and horse suffered as lately as the eighties of the nineteenth century—the decade in which I joined the cavalry—are now but unhappy, far-off memories.

The author lays down as the two main points in the art of horsemanship, Balance and Sympathy.

The subject is thoroughly explored and discussed in a style which is lucid and clear; and the conclusions reached are based on reasons cleverly and convincingly stated.

Connected with Balance are the problems of the forward seat, stirrups, and grip, on which—and many other points—we are given enlightenment and guidance.

An interesting chapter is that headed “Should Ladies Ride

FOREWORD

Astride?" Also commendable is the chapter on "Mastery"; in this chapter occurs the shrewd comment, "No one has ever seen a refusal at the last fence."

All riders, skilled or unskilled, old or young, should give the volume a hearty welcome; and in its perusal they will find pleasure and profit.



THE RESIDENCY,
CAIRO.
April 8, 1925.

INTRODUCTION

“On appelle jeu combiné des aides de travail combiné des jambes des mains, du corps, et de l'assiette.”—BARROIL.

FOR many years it has seemed to me that the standard of riding in this country is too low.

If one stands, as I have often done, watching the field out hunting jumping a simple fence, it is surprising how few know how to negotiate it properly, and how a plain post and rails, provided they are unbreakable, will stop nearly the whole field.

I feel sure that if only we would give more attention to the science and art of horsemanship, we would be able to go straighter to hounds, with more enjoyment and greater safety.

I feel, also, that in steeplechasing there is yet plenty of room for improvement amongst our jockeys, and that much more can be done in the sympathetic handling of the horse in stable and saddle. Sometimes we see horses being ridden out hunting in severe bits, fretting against the unnecessary discomfort. Sometimes we notice horses' sides pitted with the marks of the spur, and sometimes we see them being knocked about either in the hunting field or training ground with crop or cane.

All these things are unnecessary and stupid.

The best results are obtained by sympathetic treatment, where both horse and rider understand one another. It has been said that a man will do anything he is asked if he is asked in the right way. I believe that to be true, and as with men, so with horses. I also believe that a horse will do anything he is asked if he only understands what the question is.

It is also sometimes said that the horse is a stupid animal, but the more we study him the more we realise that, far from being stupid, he has some capabilities even greater than man himself.

In some directions he does appear abnormally foolish, as in shying, but there are other lines in which his intellect is wonderfully developed, as the following story will show :

In Flanders, during December, 1914, I had occasion to stable my horses in a then quiet little town, for about ten days. After that, my horses were transported all over northern France and Belgium, sometimes by train, sometimes by night, backwards and forwards over the whole theatre of operations. In November, 1917, or nearly three years afterwards, I was hacking along through a town when suddenly my horse essayed to turn down a side street for no apparent reason. I then realised that she was making for her old stable, the one she had occupied three years before ! I should add that the town then bore but little resemblance to its appearance of 1914, and I myself had certainly not recognised where I was.

Most of us could give similar experiences, I feel sure, because the more we have to do with horses the more we wonder at their wonderful gifts of memory and observation.

Consequently, in training and riding horses, we should always bear in mind the attributes they do possess, and work on those.

It has been said, "Blessed is he that knoweth his own limitations," and I would add to that, "Blessed is the trainer that knoweth the horse's limitations," for once we realise what a horse cannot understand, we are well on the way to sympathetic treatment and effective training.

With regard to horsemanship, my endeavour has been to establish those principles which, in my opinion, make the true horseman. Balance is its very essence, and to be "one" with the horse in every movement is the ideal of us all.

Although many did not agree with me originally in my advocacy of the forward or balanced seat, this has now, I think, been generally adopted, and is taught in most up-to-date schools.

But to those who still are in doubt, and hesitate to change the methods which they have been taught, I can only urge a trial.

We who have become converted would never go back to the

old way, and I feel sure were we to take our horses to the poll, they would unanimously vote "forward."

In the steeplechasing world we find criticism almost entirely devoted to the race-riding aspect of horsemanship. This is, of course, only natural. We want our jockeys to win races, and the one that wins most races is the best jockey. In this simple line of reasoning there is little to dispute, but, if it is therefore assumed that he is necessarily a specially good horseman, then the logic breaks down.

There are two very distinct points we should keep clear in our minds. Race riding is one. Here we have the question of judgment predominating. How to get a good start, how to save the horse through the race, to get and maintain a good position, to watch the other competitors, to know when to come along, and how to ride a finish. All these things can be done, and, I may say, are done, by jockeys who are quite moderate as riders. But as long as they don't fall off, and keep winning races, the owners, trainers, and the public are satisfied, and they are described as "perfect horsemen."

This wouldn't matter if it only referred to race riding, and the eulogy might quite easily be true, but unfortunately for their supporters, photographs are taken of them when jumping. They may be sitting all wrong, they may be perpetrating many grave errors in equitation, but because they are pictures of winning jockeys they are taken as examples of "how to sit a horse over a steeplechase fence."

It is this we have to fight against. Because some well-known jockey happens to ride that way, or because on some occasion, probably inadvertently, he has got into some awkward position, it is no proof that that is how it should be done.

And yet this is what is happening. We see it in books on riding, and we see it in the picture papers, and it is very misleading to all those who are studying the arts of horsemanship.

In public estimation, any rider who rides in "the National" must be a good horseman, and everyone who wins it must be superb.

But from photographs and slow moving pictures we are now able to see that there is often much to be desired, yet as long as a jockey comes in well up, all the faults are overlooked.

Personally I think a great deal more is necessary.

I think that if any jockey were to study the art of equitation a little more, he would win a greater number of races, his falls would be fewer, and his reputation enhanced.

When schooling, a good tip to find out how your jockey has been riding is to watch his breathing as he pulls up. If he is much out of breath, unless he has been having a difficult time with his horse, you know he must have been sitting all wrong over his fences. The good horseman, under all normal conditions, will ride a school without effort to himself, and should pull up undistressed. It is just as important to watch the breathing of your jockey as of your horse.

We must try, therefore, to avoid thinking that because So-and-so has won so many races, his riding must be first-class.

The more correct way of reasoning should be this. So-and-so, in spite of having had no special training in the arts of equitation, has succeeded in winning many races, and is, therefore, a first-class race rider. If he had had really good schooling he would have done better still.

Let us think for a moment how these steeplechase riders are trained. They usually begin as lads, and ride walking exercise. After that they do some gallops, and are eventually tried in public. If they get too heavy for flat racing they take to steeplechasing. They then do some more gallops over hurdles, and a few "schools" over fences. They learn to stick on somehow, and then, when they have won their first steeplechase their education is complete.

Of course, I am only speaking generally ; I do not include everyone, for, naturally, some of our leading jockeys are very fine horsemen. But such is the standard of steeplechase horsemanship, and many people to-day agree that it might be a good deal better than it is.

It is hoped that the few hints I have been able to give in the following pages may help in a small degree to improve the standards of riding, not only in the hunting field, but also between the flags.

Before concluding, I feel I must say a few words about falls.

“A fall’s a awful thing,” we well know was the opinion of Jorrocks, but when he said that, he was only referring to himself. I want my readers to go with me a little further.

We should regard a fall as an error of training, riding, or judgment. I do not, naturally, refer to the quite unexpected fall that sometimes does occur, which no one can prevent, but the “common or garden” toss we see so many of in the hunting field over normal fences.

The usual reasons for tosses are apparent enough :

Putting a horse badly at a fence ;

Overfacing a horse ;

Going too fast, or too slow ;

Pulling a horse right into the fence, and so on.

All of these are errors of horsemanship or of judgment.

When a horse falls by galloping into a blind ditch, this may be an error of training or of riding or judgment. But whatever it is, it is nothing to be proud of.

Have we not sometimes heard our young thrusters adding up their falls after a day’s hunting, and giving the cross for valour to the one who had most !

This is very sporting, but it is wrong-headed. We want to shove along as straight as possible always, but we should be *ashamed* of our falls.

The good horseman has very, very few, and goes well ; the indifferent performer has very many, and never gets anywhere.

There is a curious thing about falling—we seldom or never see a bad fall over a big fence. The worst accidents are always on the flat or at gaps. The reason for this is that at a big fence both horse and rider are on the look-out. It is when the unexpected happens, when both are totally unprepared, that the really bad fall occurs.

The lesson, therefore, is that every obstacle, no matter how small or insignificant, should be ridden at just as carefully as a big fence.

Pull your horse together, and put him at it, as if it were a serious

obstacle. If we do not do this, we are inviting trouble. There is quite enough in this hard world as it is without running into unnecessary difficulties, which may lead us into nursing homes, and worse still, the loss of the season's hunting.

Good horsemanship is so much a question of balance that my leading chapters will be largely devoted to this subject. Length of stirrup leather and length of rein are intimately connected with it, in so much that unless these are correct, we shall never ride well.

My first chapter, therefore, deals with the balance of the body in the saddle.

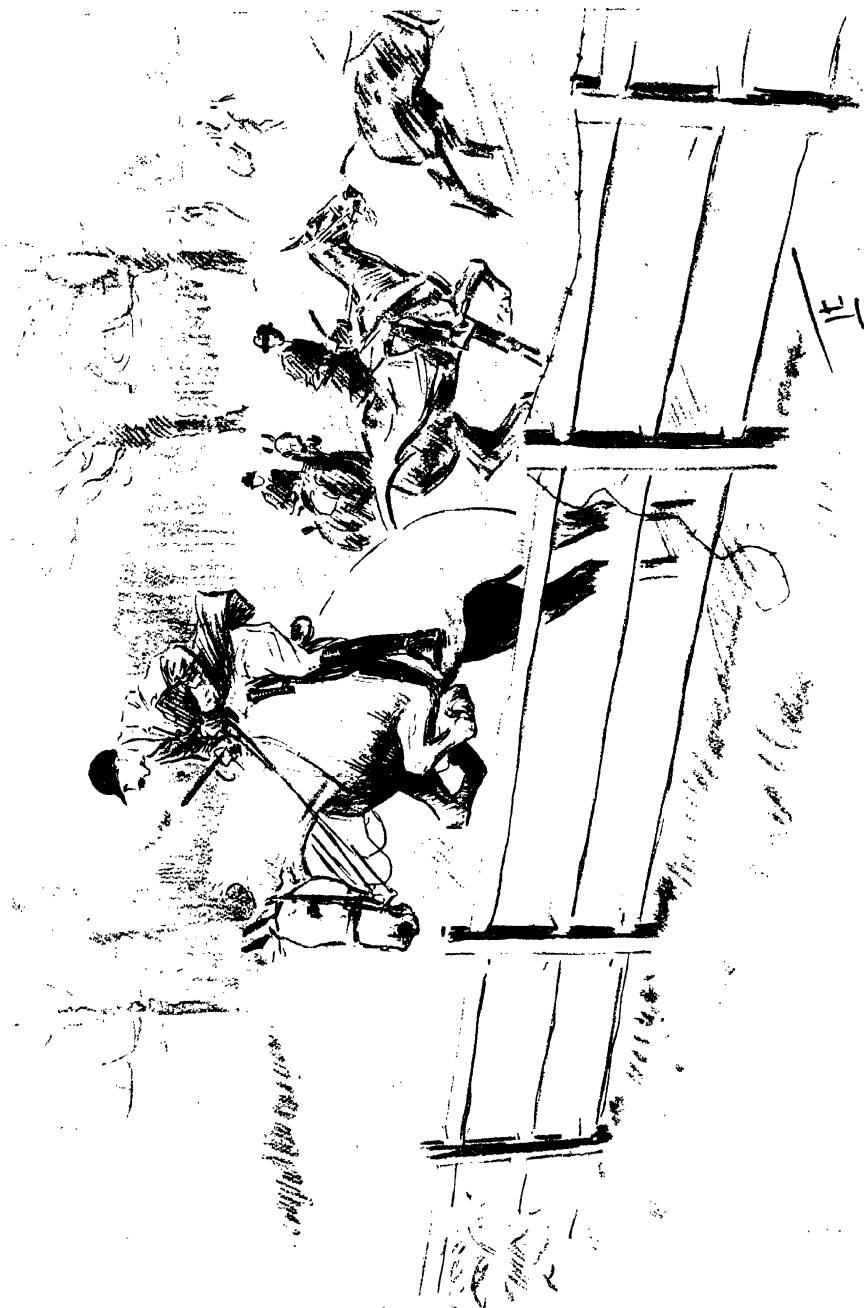
“ Head free and loins free ” is the motto for the leap, and “ Blame yourself before you blame your horse ” is the motto for the horseman.

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PLAIN POSTS AND RAILS, PROVIDED THEY ARE UNBREAKABLE, WILL STOP NEARLY THE WHOLE FIELD.

MOUNT AND MAN

I

BALANCE

I don't know any tune from any other ;
I couldn't sing a song if I were paid ;
I couldn't, for the ransom of a brother,
Hum a single thing that anybody played.
But I know one melody,
That can stir the heart of me.
It is the mad and merry challenge of the horn,
With the chime of hounds that follow,
And the cheer and rate and holloa,
That can shake the very dewdrops from the thorn.

THERE are so many ways of sitting on a saddle, and of riding generally, that it is difficult, even for experts, to explain why one man's seat is preferable to that of another. In every art plenty of latitude must be given to individuality, and there is no art in which this is more noticeable than in that of horsemanship. Some riders achieve good results by being what are called strong riders. They remain with the horse largely by muscular effort. Others seem to succeed equally well who have no such pretensions. Some get fair results by the "crash and bang" style, and others by more delicate treatment ; but few are satisfied with the results, for most of us feel there is much room for improvement.

It is generally admitted that balance is an essential and a fundamental of riding, and it is the object of this chapter to look into this matter and to find out if we cannot discover some clue to the solution of the problem of "seat."*

* In this connection I should like to quote the Earl of Pembroke, who wrote in 1778: "No man can be either well or firmly seated on horseback unless he be master of the balance of his body, quite unconstrained, with a full possession of himself, and at his ease on all occasions whatever."

MOUNT AND MAN

Even though there are many ways of sitting on a saddle, there is only one way in which you can be truly balanced. If the seat be not a balanced one, then connection with the saddle can be

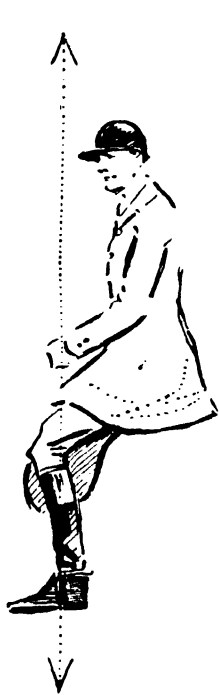


FIG. 1.

The usual seat at the walk. Partly influenced by the build of the saddle, as long as nothing more than the walk is attempted, it has the merit of ease and simplicity.



FIG. 2.

This is a very common seat, but as the foot is slightly forward, it throws the line of balance of the whole body further back than in Fig. 1.



FIG. 3.

Another common seat. It is obvious that the faults in Fig. 2 are still more apparent.

The dotted line represents the line of equipoise.

maintained only by force, either by the legs, the hands, or by both. If the seat be approaching a balance, the effort can be reduced, and if the balance be a true one, we only require a normal and natural

pressure. So, if we wish to ride comfortably, we must ride balanced.*

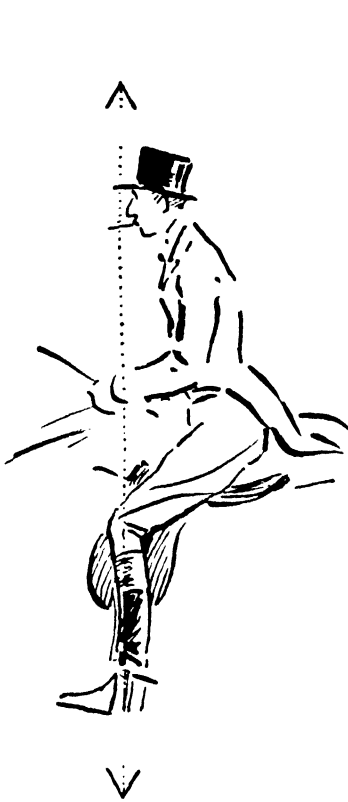


FIG. 4.

The usual seat at the trot. In this instance the line of balance is still backward, but not to the same extent as at the walk.



FIG. 5.

This is the *correct* position at the trot. Here we see that the balance of the body is *not* behind, but is very slightly forward, which is the only way of overcoming the dynamic force of the propulsion. It should be noted that the stirrup is vertically below the side bars.

The dotted line represents the line of equipoise.

There can be only three distinct fulcra from which balance can be maintained in the saddle, namely, the seat bones, the knees, and

* "Horses, I think, yield the lower jaw more readily if . . . the upper part of the rider's body is inclined forward, than if the body is kept upright."—LORD PEMBROKE.

the feet. Each procedure has moments for use, and restriction at all times to only one of these cannot be correct. It is the art of horsemanship to know when and how to use each at the right time and in the right way.

When sitting in a saddle naturally, at both the standstill and the walk, it is necessary to have the seat bones as the fulcrum for the balance, because the weight of the body rests entirely upon the seat, as when sitting in a chair. Perhaps, some day, saddles will be built on lines indicated in a later chapter, which will help us to be still better placed, and we shall be able to bring the balance of the body, even when sitting without movement, into a more accurate position. As matters now are, Fig. 1 is much more correct than either Figs. 2 or 3. Fig. 3 depicts a very common attitude which has little to recommend it. The respective merits of these three seats can be judged in a moment directly we add motion to the pictures. Let us assume that the horse makes a sudden leap into the air, and it will then be seen at once that No. 3 would have a very poor chance, No. 2 might get off with a bit of a scramble, while No. 1 would probably meet the unexpected difficulty with reasonable assurance. It should be noted, however, that the rider in Fig. 1 should have his feet further back. The correct position is that the toe should be vertically beneath the knee, and not the ball of the foot as some people advocate. In other words, the stirrup leather should hang vertically, and not the leg as some teachers advocate.

This walking seat is, however, suitable for that pace only. When there is no spring, the seat bones must rest upon the saddle, and the balance is derived from those points; but when the pace increases to anything beyond the cadence of a measured tread, the balance must instantly be transferred elsewhere.

A good rule when sitting in the saddle is to see that there is a hand's breadth between the back of the rider's seat and the cantle of the saddle. When we are told to sit in the centre of the saddle, it means not only centrally when looking at it from side to side, but also from end to end. This is an important point upon which much depends as the riding lessons progress.



VISIONS OF ROUND-ED FORMS.

This is what I think the correct position in the saddle should be :

The rider should place his seat in the saddle as explained in the preceding paragraph.

The legs should hang naturally without unduly pressing the knees into the saddle, so that the stirrup leathers hang vertically, with the

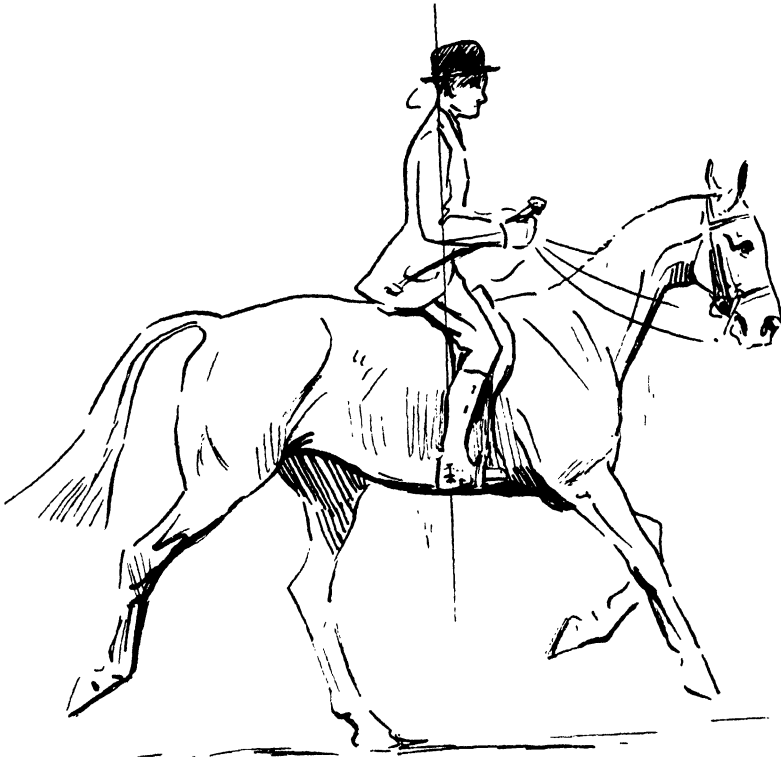


FIG. 6.

irons held firmly on the balls of the feet, with the small toe higher than the big toe, the heels pressed down, and the thighs at, roughly, 45 degrees.

The back should be hollowed, the chin drawn in, and the eyes looking over the horse's ears.

The upper arms should hang naturally and vertically from the shoulders.

The hands should hold the reins with an equal and light pressure upon the horse's mouth, so that the tips of the thumbs point towards each other, and the little fingers are turned upwards towards the body in such a way that the hands are about 6 inches from the body and 4 inches apart.

Fig. 6 is, therefore, the first or preliminary balance, where the whole weight of the body rests upon the saddle, and the legs, beyond a slight pressure, need not be operating appreciably. In this phase, ease and freedom are the primary consideration, and the only rule, beyond that of having the feet well back, is to see that the seat bones are as far forward in the saddle as possible, in order to take the weight from the loins, and to reduce the probability of being thrown back whenever the horse takes it into his head to display sudden activity.

Naturally, when we are riding at ease, much latitude can be allowed; but we must remember that the balance from the seat bones cannot be maintained beyond the walk. There used to be what was described as the "old gentleman's seat," in which the body was back and the feet forward at the canter, and I have visions of rounded forms on stout cobs forging their way over ridge and furrow with an unjustifiable serenity. Catastrophe always followed the unexpected; but as long as things went well, they completed their day's hunting without mishap. I wish I could say we are past those times, because, however pleasurable to the rider, it is very much the reverse to the horse. It is, in fact, a travesty of riding, it is not horsemanship.

This brings us to the next stage in our survey of the balance in the saddle: when motion is no longer our servant but our master. There may be occasions in riding when the balance of the body is maintained by the knee grip. I am not now referring to the balance being assisted by the knees—which is a normal condition—but to those occasions when the fulcrum of the balance is actually at the knee. These occasions are, fortunately, fleeting, for they demand

PLATE III.



CONTORTIONS THAT LOOK SO RIDICULOUS.

as strong a grip as we are capable of, and the times when such a solution is necessary are comparatively rare.* It happens, perhaps, when approaching a fence on a sticky horse, which is likely to refuse, or on a quick one which is "nappy," or when finishing a race, or, now and then, on the polo ground. Even at these moments the balance of the body is not necessarily from the knee; but it is on occasions such as these when this balance could be attained and might be efficacious. The point is, in truth, of little importance, and it would not be worth dwelling on were it not a somewhat prevalent view that we obtain our balance from our knees. Before passing on, therefore, it may be as well to visualise what a balance from the knees really means.

If the body is supported by a grip of the knees alone, it follows that there can be no weight on the stirrup irons, and they will be, with difficulty, kept on the feet. It is this fact which produces the loose stirrup we so often see when jumping. But although a strong pressure must be exerted upon the foot, nevertheless the knee must be firmly fixed in the saddle.

I speak of no contentious matter when I say that, under all circumstances, it is right to have the leathers taut. That means that a considerable proportion of the rider's weight must, in any case, rest on the irons. If that is so, then I think it is obvious that the rider should not attempt to balance himself from his knees. A tip in training pupils to jump is to get them to keep a bit of cardboard or a coin on the inside of the stirrup iron, by pressure of the foot throughout the leap. This is far better than getting them to hold something with their knees, as is often advocated.

We do have, in riding, very often a combination of a partial pressure upon the stirrup iron and of a partial grip with the knee. This is, in fact, a method of riding which is only too frequently adopted. It works very well under normal conditions, but when unexpected or difficult occasions arise, its faults become apparent. The difficulty of balance in such circumstances is not so great, pro-

* The biographer of Assheton Smith states: "He rode quite loose, quite by balance, and never seemed to grip much with his knees."

vided the lower portion of the leg is vertical ; but should the foot be thrown even moderately forward, the difficulties become obvious. The fulcrum, instead of being a point, becomes, in the first case a vertical, and in the second case an oblique base, upon which to balance, and its difficulties can be observed if we study Fig. 8. The line of equipoise, in this case, passes half-way between the knee and the foot, and it can be readily seen how much "behind the work" such a seat is.

It is obviously unbalanced by itself, and can only remain in that position by considerable effort or by support on the back of the saddle. If we add propulsion, we can counteract that force only by pressure on that point, or, of course, from support by the reins. In other words, the horse has to bear extra weight upon his loins or his mouth.

It may be asked, In what way does a rider balance himself when riding without stirrups? Does he not place himself in a position similar to this, and does he not remain on the horse's back by balance? The answer to this is, that such balance as is obtained is one of expediency and not of permanence. In riding bareback, or without stirrups, grip becomes a necessary precaution, and grip is alone necessary when the body of the rider is becoming unbalanced. Consequently, it can be asserted that riding in such circumstances is nothing more nor less than an unbalanced equestrianism, the difficulties of which can be partially overcome by intelligent anticipation. For example, when going round a corner, the rider leans inwards, and so overcomes centrifugal force. His other difficulties may sometimes be surmounted by the use of rein and hand, a device which merely shows that the rider is out of balance, and nature comes to his aid by the laws of self-protection. The question of "bumping" in the saddle need not be discussed, as it is merely a process of "cup and ball." The horse throws the rider up and catches him again. It is, therefore, the third phase of balance which is the most important of all.

The balance should be, normally, at all paces beyond the walk, from the feet. This is a matter of such importance in equitation

PLATE IV.



THIS IS A VERY COMMON SEAT. Here, the weight of the rider's body is taken on the horse's loins. It may be comfortable for the rider, but it is terribly trying for the horse.

that it can hardly be over-emphasised. When this point has been grasped, many of the difficulties previously experienced fade away. This rule, largely unaccepted and unapplied as it is to-day, is, after all, quite clear when we come to think it over. Let us, at any rate for the moment, accept this fact, and we come at once to another

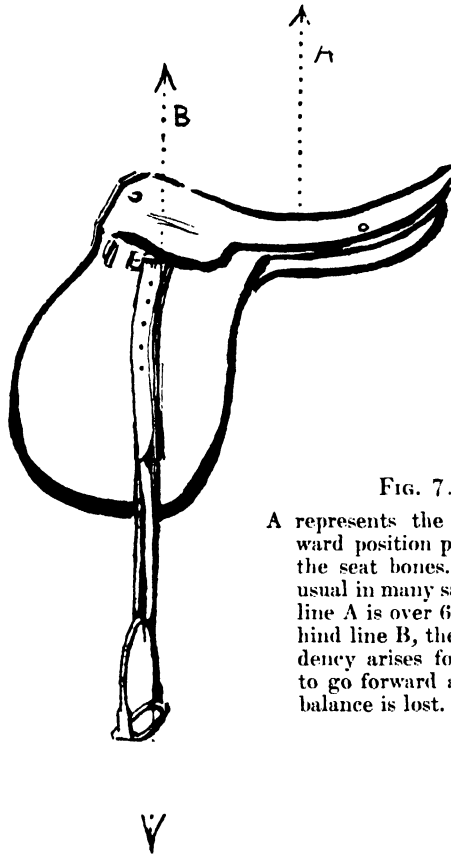


FIG. 7.

A represents the most forward position possible for the seat bones. If, as is usual in many saddles, the line A is over 6 inches behind line B, then the tendency arises for the feet to go forward and a true balance is lost.

important point. If we were on our feet, and were about to make a series of jumps (which is what we are doing on horseback at every stride at the trot, canter and gallop), we should find it very awkward if we were to jump off up-hill ground every time. We should always prefer to jump off level ground. But in the saddle, if the foot is pushed ever so little forward, the stirrup leather is off the perpen-

dicular, and that is similar to jumping off rising ground. It is this fact which produces the grotesque effect some beginners display when rising at the trot (Plate III.). Their feet are stuck out inordinately, and in the effort of the body to rise against the "hill" they have themselves created, they produce those contortions which look so ridiculous. If only that beginner were told his fault, he would be cured instantly. The ridicule, in fact, is directed at the wrong person. It is the instructor who is to blame, not the pupil. This question of the upright stirrup leather is a constant factor in equitation. No matter whether we are approaching a fence, in process of its negotiation, or landing, we should attempt to maintain its perpendicularity. Needless to say that, as the balance is from the foot, the weight of the body must be largely borne upon the irons at all times. A slack leather is an unerring sign of an ill-balanced body. This is the best way by which we can maintain our balance, although there are many methods of riding more or less efficacious.

Through having our bodies in perfect equipoise, based upon the stirrup iron in this way, we not only find great comfort and control of ourselves, but it is also an immense help to the horse, which is then carrying the rider's weight away from his loins and close to his own centre of gravity. In every way, therefore, is the principle a sound one, and once it is mastered, the improvement visible in crossing a country, either in the hunting field or in the 'chase, is most noticeable. It applies equally to the side saddle, for, whichever our sex, we are all bound by the same rules, and, whether we hunt or race, we cannot get away from the old, old fact that in any form of athletics, if we wish to be balanced, we must be balanced from our feet.

The reason why it is at present impossible to be scientifically balanced at the standstill (except from the seat bones) is because of the position of the side bars in relation to the seat.

If a rider is to be truly balanced, *i.e.*, from his feet, when sitting in the saddle, his seat bones should be only a few inches behind his heels. If we look at Fig. 7, we notice that the line A (or the position of the seat) is considerably behind the line B. So that a

rider sitting in the saddle would find his seat bones nearly a foot behind the heel line.

In order to counteract this, and to obtain a true line of equipoise vertically passing upward from the stirrup iron, it would be necessary for him to lean his body forward to an appreciable extent, which would, of course, be grotesque, or to sit in a more forward position in the saddle than that designed by the saddler.

This matter is, however, gone into more fully in a later chapter, but as we are at present dealing with things as they are, and not as they might be, it must be accepted that there are two distinct balances in the saddle.

When walking or standing still we should be balanced from our seat bones, and at all other paces from our feet.

NOTE.—The Duke of Newcastle in the seventeenth century said :

“ The Rider ought to sit on the fork, not on the buttocks, in the middle of the saddle, and to advance as much as he can towards the pommel, leaving a hand's breadth between his backside and the saddle. Holding his legs as when he stands upon the ground, and fixing himself firm upon the stirrups.

“ A good seat is of such importance that the regular movement of the horse entirely depends upon it.

“ I venture to affirm that he who does not sit genteely upon a horse will never be a good horseman.”

II

THE LENGTH OF THE STIRRUP LEATHER

I leap to the saddle a man indeed,
For all I can do and dare
In the power and speed that is mine at need,
While I sit on the back of my mare.

THE length of our leathers is so intimately connected with balance in the saddle that it comes as a natural sequel to the last chapter. We can never expect to maintain a true balance unless we have paid special attention to this apparently unimportant matter. If we look round us in the hunting field, we shall search in vain for uniformity. We shall see "the steeplechasing gent" with his stirrups very short, and we shall also see quite a large number who are riding too long. If we seek advice, we shall get a variety of replies which will leave us no wiser than before.

Some people will say that a fat horse requires a longer (or shorter) leather than a thin one, others that it depends upon the shape of the rider's legs. Some say that a man with round thighs must ride shorter (or longer) than a man with flat thighs. No one will be able to tell you what round thighs are, what they mean, or what they imply. But that will not matter in the least; you will, undoubtedly, be assured that it is intimately connected with the length of the stirrup leather. The more questions you ask the more bewildered you will become, until you give up wondering, and carry on in the way that seems to suit best.

Most books will tell you that one way to find out if your stirrups are the right length before mounting is to measure them with the length of the arm to the tip of the fingers.

This is certainly a good rough rule, because it does prevent the rider finding them inordinately long or short after he has mounted; but it is only a guiding rule; it is not intended to be either scientific or exhaustive.

Another rule, which applies after mounting has taken place, is to rise in the stirrups, and see that the fork just clears the pommel.

But this rule has less to recommend it because, after mounting, if the first rule is not found satisfactory, the second one will be of no assistance.

There is, in fact, nothing else that will help us except experiment. We cannot say if we are riding the right length until we have tested that particular horse in the particular pace we intend to adopt. There may be variations even in the day of the week. For instance, on Monday morning, after Sunday's rest, when the horse is very fresh, he may easily require one hole shorter than on a Saturday, say, when he is tired.

The question is, after all, a very simple one, and can be explained without very much difficulty. It is one of stride, and that alone decides the matter. If you are riding a horse with straight shoulders and a tied-in action, you can ride longer than if you are on a horse with good shoulders and free movement. If you are only going to jump very small obstacles at a steady canter, you can ride longer than if you intend to jump big fences at a fast gallop. If you are going to ride a steeplechase, you must ride shorter than if you were out hunting. The reason being nothing more nor less than the stride, or spring, the horse is going to make.

We must remember that every pace beyond the walk is, in reality, a succession of jumps. The simple jog (when the horse is fidgety) represents a jump at every stride of about 6 inches; the steady trot, of about 2 feet to 3 feet; the canter, of 4 feet or so; and the extended gallop, 6 to 7 feet. These are, roughly speaking, the distances the horse is actually in suspension. It does not represent the length of the stride, which is another matter altogether. From this we get to the varied distances of the leap, which, seldom under 10 feet, can extend to 25 feet and even more. Thirty feet is common in the annals of hunting when recording exceptional jumps. Twenty feet is so common that it is done by almost every good horse out of a canter (when given freedom by his rider). Unfortunately, we have no records of steeplechasing, but it would be extremely interesting if

we had measurements of what horses have done at, we will say, the first fence at Liverpool.*

It stands to reason, therefore, that if we are riding a horse that is going to cover 25 feet in his stride, we must ride shorter than if we never expect to cover more than 10 feet. If, however, we are hacking to the meet, we can reasonably expect that we shall do nothing more than trot (or, say, a 4-foot spring); we should then ride at a suitable length for that sized stride and pull up our stirrups only when we arrive at the meet. In the same way, when hacking home, especially if both horse and rider are tired, we should let the stirrups out, because the spring will not be over 2 feet or so.

In dealing with this subject, we must remember two things: the shorter the stirrup, the more it throws back the weight on to the horse's loins at the walk and stand, and the more cramped the rider becomes. We should always remember to ride as short as we must, but not shorter than we need. A rider, for example, with a steeplechase seat throughout the whole of a day's hunting would bring back both himself and his horse tired out. This, I think, sufficiently deals with the laws of length, and we will now turn to the reasons for their enforcement.

If a rider is riding too long—when jumping a fence particularly—it is very difficult for him to be properly balanced in the saddle, and he will find himself “left behind.” This produces a variety of undesirable results, all or any of which may occur. The horse gets a jab in the mouth, he has to jump with the rider's weight on his loins, he jumps without freedom, and he may even fall on that one account alone. In fact, an unbalanced jump is a most uncomfortable thing for both horse and rider, and, what is more, it is dangerous. Consequently, if we want to cross a country well and safely, we cannot think too much of the ever-present problem of balance. To show how important it is to the horse, let me relate the following experience, which very clearly proves the point in question.

One day I was jumping a post and rails on a very highly trained

* There is a generally accepted record in America of a horse having jumped 8 feet 2 inches in height and 37 feet in length in one jump.

and accomplished performer, and several times in succession the top rail was knocked down. An onlooker expressed surprise that the horse had gone off his jumping to such an extent, and advocated getting out the whip and "tickling him up" a bit. But it struck me that, as the ground was sloping upwards on the take-off side, I might do well to shorten my stirrups a little, so I pulled them up, only one hole, and put the horse at the rails again. This time I realised that I was much better balanced, and the result was most apparent. The rails were cleared by over 6 inches each time afterwards without difficulty. The horse had recovered his form! The fault, truly, was mine all the time; the horse had never been to blame. This shows, if anything can, how important these apparently small things are, and what a difference they make to both our safety and comfort during a day's hunting.

Having now given both rule and reason, let us finally try to explain how the rule comes to be. Why should we have to ride shorter because the horse's stride or leap is bigger? The answer is to be found on the floor of the gymnasium. If we wish to jump on foot a distance of 2 feet or so, we find we can do that with a very slight effort, and we need bend our knees only a little (*vide* Fig. 8). But supposing we are called upon to jump as far as we are able, we find we have to sink our bodies until our knee-joints form about a right angle (*vide* Fig. 10). These two exercises have their analogy in the saddle, in the steady trot and the steeplechase.

Supposing, however, we sank so that our knee-joints formed an angle less than 90° , we should find we had overdone it, and we should not be able to jump so far. Here we have the example of the over-short rider, who looks so grotesque on the racecourse. There are limits to everything, and I think it may be said that it can never be necessary to ride shorter than the right angle.

There is yet one further point which must not be overlooked. The length we ride depends very much upon where we sit in the saddle. A length that appears almost short when sitting in the centre of the saddle becomes quite long if we slide ourselves back. It is a little difficult to give exact calculations, but the

MOUNT AND MAN

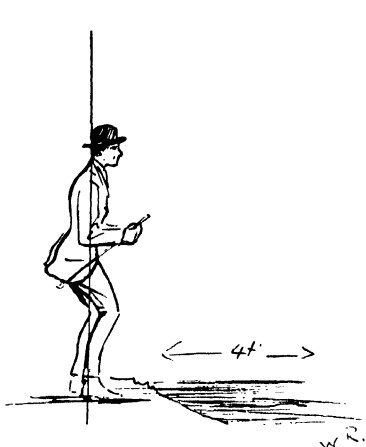


FIG. 8.

A man going to jump a 4-foot obstacle on his feet. Compare this position with —

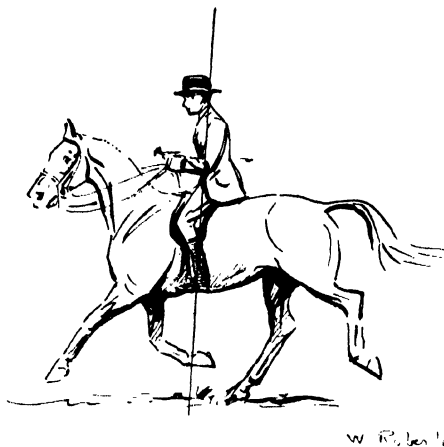


FIG. 9.

—the position of a man hacking, where the horse's "suspension" is 4 feet.

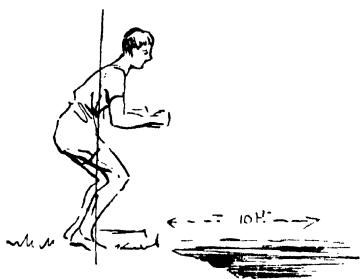


FIG. 10.

This is the position of a man going to jump the biggest distance he possibly can. Note that the angle of the knee-joint is a right angle.

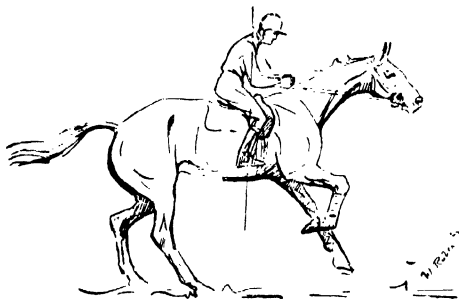


FIG. 11.

Compare that with the position of a jockey approaching a fence.

proportion is, roughly, 4 inches in the saddle to 1 inch on the leather.

Before, therefore, we can decide what length we are riding, we must have a guiding rule as to where we intend to sit. Fortunately, this rule is quite simple. We should sit always as far forward in the saddle as possible. Although easy to state, it is not easy to

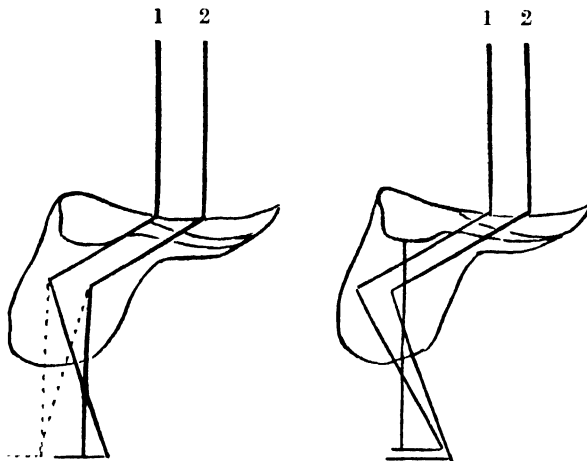


FIG. 12.

Consequently the rider who sits in position No. 1 can ride longer, with the same result as the one who assumes position No. 2. *Note.*—The rider in No. 1 position is sitting comfortably, but if he slips back to position 2 he will find his leathers much too long. This would be still more accentuated did he adopt the position of the dotted line. About 4 inches in the saddle represents about 1 inch in the length of leather.

carry out, because with the movement of the horse the tendency to slip backwards is always present. Nevertheless, we must do all we can to counteract this force, because it is of great importance to the horse. It is important in the hunting field, and it is still more important in cavalry work.*

Every infantryman knows how necessary it is to have the pack

* Xenophon stated nearly 2,500 years ago that he did not approve of a seat "which is as though the man were in a chair, but rather as though he *were standing upright with his legs apart.*"

well up off his loins. The horse also knows what a strain weight on this part of his back is, but, unfortunately, he cannot tell us so, except by the exhaustion he may occasionally display.

So let us bear this in mind whenever we ride, and take three rules for guidance :

1. Sit as far forward in the saddle as possible.
2. Adjust the stirrups according to expected movement.
3. See that the stirrup leathers are vertical, and then it will be found that the balance of the body is established on safe foundations.

There are just two more points which should not be forgotten.

With a new pair of stirrup leathers it is always a good thing to number the holes, so that when we wish to alter them we can mention to the groom who may be helping us the other side which hole we are putting the tongue into.

But do not forget that leathers stretch very much, so that if we have ridden for the past week in a certain hole, do not think that that must be a permanency.

We must also remember that they do not necessarily stretch equally, and that it is as well to test them now and then in the saddle-room, so as to make sure that when we are in the saddle we are riding level.

III

REINS

With your head and your heart held up,
And your heels and hands held down ;
Your knees pressed close to your horse's sides,
And your elbows close to your own.

I FEAR we frequently hear it said, " Oh, So-and-so rides very well, he rides with such a nice long rein." I am glad to say that I think this idea is much less prevalent than it was. Why it should have ever been prevalent at all is one of those many mysteries that perplex us whenever we talk horsemanship.

First of all, whatever does it mean? Did it mean that the rider at the walk has long reins, then we would all be agreed at once. We do want long reins at this pace. But it is not applied to that at all. It is when the rider is jumping and the horse's head is free. This is what they refer to. If they see the reins flopping about throughout the parabola of the leap and on the impact, then this remark comes out. We have heard it often. Heaven knows, freedom during the leap is the essence of horsemanship, but we also want control during the approach and contact throughout the jump ; without which, approbation is misplaced.

It may surprise those critics to hear that the rule is, the bigger the leap, the shorter the reins. The length of the rein is, indeed, a very important matter, and far too little study is given to this point. The length of the stirrup leather is, possibly, the first consideration of balance in the saddle ; but, undoubtedly, the second, running it very close for the first place, is the length of the rein. The rules which apply to the one apply equally to the other. It is the law of preparedness—to be ready for the unexpected.

Thus, if we are hacking at a walk on a quiet horse or a tired hunter, it is absurd to expect anything " unexpected." We know we are only walking, and nothing else comes into our calculations.

In such circumstances it would be wrong to ride with short reins or short stirrups. But supposing we are walking on a fresh horse to the starting post, then we have every reason to expect the "unexpected," and he who rides with long reins in such circumstances deserves all he gets.

If we glance at Fig. 13 we see here a rider hacking along with an easy (but incorrect) seat. His reins are long, and he looks and feels both confident and comfortable. At this moment, however, his horse takes it into his head to give a little playful buck. Now, reins which are a suitable length for a horse with his nose

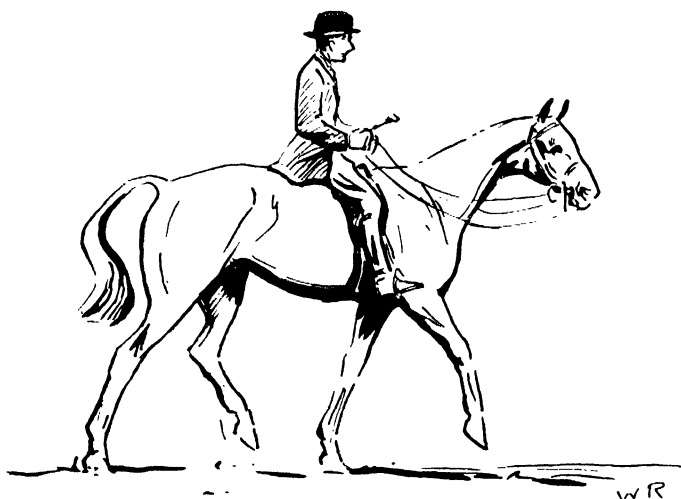


FIG. 13.

stuck out are very troublesome indeed when he is bridling. We know that, if we lose contact, he will be off and away. So, if the rider is fairly experienced, he overcomes the difficulty by getting into the position in Fig. 14. We must remember that the buck has come suddenly, and he has had no time to shorten his reins. So all he can do is to push his hands back as far as possible so that he can keep control on the horse's mouth, and throw his body forward so as to maintain his balance in the saddle. This is his best solution, and it works only if we do not let the horse know the

parlous state we are in. If we keep up the control until we can shorten up, all is well ; but if, in order to shorten up, we have to

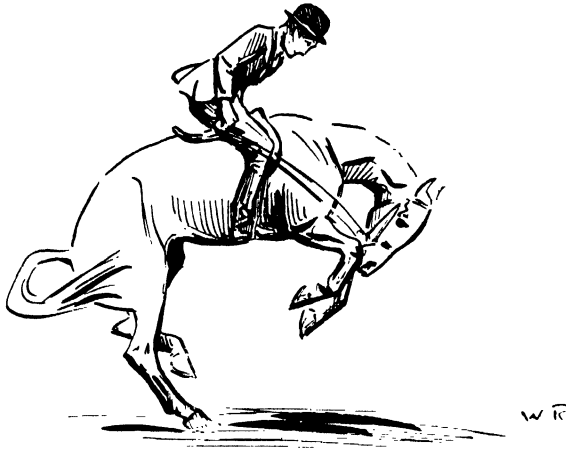


FIG. 14.



FIG. 15.

give him his head, it may be many yards before we can consider ourselves master of the situation. It can only be described as an expedient, not a solution.

If we find we are not ready enough to throw our bodies forward at this particular moment, then, alas! no other recourse is open to us but to assume the attitude depicted in Fig. 15. Of course, we may not lose our hats and we may not throw our hands quite so high or open our mouths, but I can assure all my friends that these things do occur, and not only do they occur, but that instantaneous photography has shown us over and over again that the figure is under- rather than over-drawn.

These are the only two things that can happen if the unexpected comes when we are riding with our reins too long. But if we do

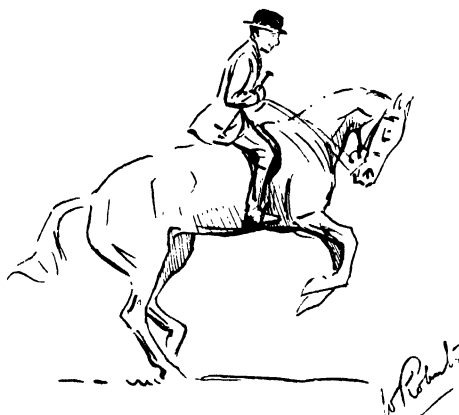


FIG. 16.

happen to be having our reins the right length, let us look at Fig. 16. Here the "untoward" event has been met with perfect ease. We see both control and balance, and the horse and rider are "one." All this has nothing to do with anything except the length of rein. It does not matter how accomplished a rider may be, if he is caught with his reins wrong, he cannot help himself. On the other hand, an inexperienced rider, if he is right in this particular when the buck or the shy does come, will find no difficulty in dealing with the situation. The subject is, however, far too complicated to be dismissed as easily as all this. The long rein is not a common fault in a beginner. It is rather that of the man who feels supremely

PLATE V.



A GOOD EXAMPLE OF LENGTH OF REIN.

confident and who is thoroughly at home in the saddle. The fault of the beginner is of riding with his reins too short.

There is nothing worse than seeing, as we often do, the rider trying to lead his horse along (*vide* Fig. 17). Here we see the over-short rein. But it is due to anxiety and lack of confidence, and as a rider increases in knowledge of what a horse can and does do, it is usual for this uncomfortable attitude to disappear.

It may now well be asked, What is the right length? It seems we must not ride short and we must not ride long, and the problem appears extremely difficult. The answer, although simple in prin-

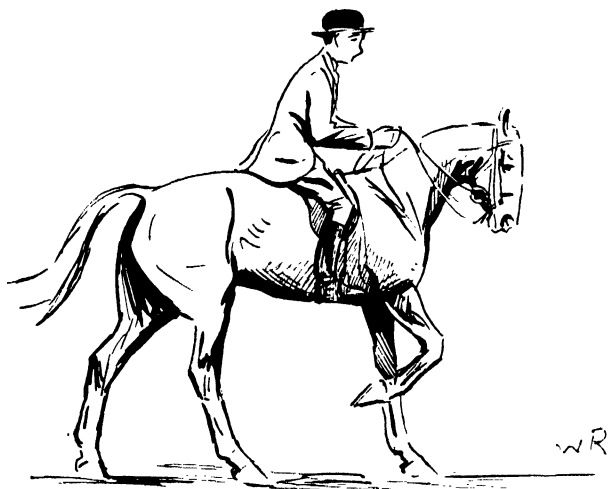


FIG. 17.

ciple, is difficult of expression. Perhaps the best reply is "preparedness." In riding-school work it is usual to give the word of warning "Prepare to trot" before giving the actual command. The reason for this is that at the walk the class would be riding with fairly long reins. If the word "Trot" were given without a preparatory signal, everyone would find their reins much too long, and confusion would result. So that before breaking into the trot it is necessary to get into a position of preparedness. And so it is with all our problems. We must be prepared. Just as the rule for the stirrup is to ride as long as possible, provided due allowance has

been made for the unexpected, so the length at which we hold the reins should be as long as possible, provided contact can be continuously maintained. Thus, supposing we are going to jump a small fence out of a canter, we need not shorten up so very much. But if we are going to take on something very big and are going to gallop at it, then we must shorten our reins very considerably.

The hands should ordinarily rest in the lap, but when we are engaged in active riding, and the horse's head gets into a variety of positions, this is not possible. We should then regulate the length so that, at the moment when the horse's head is most tucked in, the hands should just touch the coat button. But in making this rule we must remember that not only does the horse's head come in, but our bodies go forward, so that sometimes we have to shorten up our reins very much indeed—much more so, in fact, than many people believe. It is this that so often causes trouble in jumping. We would like to get our bodies more forward, but we find our hands are in the way, and I think it is this error which has caused more "faults" in the show ring than any other.

Much discussion has taken place and a great deal has been written on how to hold the reins.

Whether the curb rein should be outside or inside in the hand, and whether pressure should be exerted on the bit by turning the little finger upward and inwards, or outwards, and so on.

These are niceties which may be all-important in *haute école*, or they may not, but where I feel sure they are entirely out of place is in the hunting field or for ordinary riding.

Can anyone say that they have ever noticed the smallest difference in the obedience of their mount if the bit rein is inside or outside?

The great point is to have it one way and keep to it, so that without having to look down, one can be sure pressure is being put upon the correct one.

We were always taught in the old days to have the snaffle outside; that is a very good way, and I am, personally, quite contented to leave it at that.

PLATE VI.



REINS TOO LONG.

But don't keep changing. Whichever way you have been taught, stick to.

I have frequently advocated riding with reins that have been considerably shortened by the saddler. The ordinary length is much too long, because the spare ends flap about and get in the way. But there is another reason which is a very strong one. If they are thus shortened, we shall find it quite easy to alter the hold without losing contact by merely separating the hands for an instant to the full extent of the rein and slipping the fingers along them. With ordinary reins this manœuvre is impossible. We all know how often we have to keep on altering our grip on the reins, so that anything that makes it easier to do this is a matter that should not be overlooked. When jumping, too, the reins often slip through the fingers unintentionally. This is another point we ought to practise. Try to see that the reins are the same length after "the land" as before the "take off." There is, after all, no reason, when we come to think of it, why we should have less control after we have negotiated a fence than before we reached it.

Those of us who have finally decided not to sit back, if we can possibly avoid it, when landing over our fences, should assuredly reap all the benefits the adoption of the forward seat accords.

Not the least of these is this point of being able to use shortened reins.

If a horse bridles well, it is charming to be able to hack along the road, exercising perfect control, with the reins resting upon a finger.

With long reins such pleasures are quite unknown, and I can only recommend my readers to try the shortened rein, and I feel sure they would never go back to the old method.

It may be asked, What happens when jumping a fence when the rider has been "left behind"? Does not the long rein come in very useful on these occasions, and would not the short rein cause a great lack of freedom to the horse? The answer is, under those circumstances, to drop the reins altogether, and pick them up after landing.

As the reins have only a little slack, this is a very simple matter,

and presents no difficulty. The idea is eminently useful at polo, and many players have already taken to it. But as these are points entirely dependent upon the adoption of the “forward” seat, we must now look into this question as fully as possible in the next chapter.

PLATE VII.



LOOK AT THE LENGTH OF REIN OF THESE JOCKEYS.
On landing they will have no control until they have "wound up."

IV

THE "FORWARD" SEAT

Yet, hunting I must needs commend
In some degree and sorte
To be an honest, gainfull and
A necessary sporte.

ARGUMENTS about the so-called "novel" form of riding have now been pleaded and refuted for several years. We have its ardent supporters and its unbending opponents. Much ink has flowed and many a tongue has wagged to exhaustion in support of one side or other of the argument. And we still have those who are not convinced ready to take up the challenge against all and sundry who advocate a change in the historic art of horsemanship. So let us see if it is possible to put the case forward clearly, and sum up the situation that it may be easier for the general riding public to formulate a decision for themselves.

As a great many people who are opposed to the innovation do not quite understand what is meant by the forward seat, it is necessary to make this point quite clear before going on any further. The forward seat does not mean that the rider is to be hunched up on the horse's neck with his knees knocking his teeth down his throat, as undoubtedly some people believe. It means nothing more or less than the abolition of the practice of swinging the body back on landing over a fence. It is, perhaps, somewhat of a misnomer to call it the forward seat. It could be better expressed as the balanced seat.* Its advocates desire nothing more than that the body of the rider should be in a state of equipoise from the moment the horse takes off to the moment he lands. As the question is one of dynamics, it must be apparent to anyone who has even an elementary knowledge of this branch of mathematics that

* "The secret of giving a horse a good mouth lies in the position of the rider's body, the upper part of which should be inclined slightly forward, so that he can keep his balance and 'follow' the mouth."—CAUBERT.

in order to overcome the force of propulsion, a balance in motion can only be attained by throwing proportionately the weight in front of the statical balance. For example, when standing upright in the Tube we are in perfect equipoise as long as the train is stationary, but if we wish to remain balanced as the train starts moving, we find we have to lean forward in exact proportion to the acceleration of the engine. Suppose, however, that the train suddenly stops, then the strap-hanging that will be necessary in the carriage is, on horseback, done by putting our hands on the horse's neck, and absorbing the shock with the knee and ankle.

The next point which we must make clear before going on is that this question of balance is based entirely on the axiom that the fulcrum is the foot—a point that has been already dealt with in the chapter on Balance.

The human frame was not intended to balance itself from the knees. Our anatomy is accurately worked out for the balance to be made, and made only, from the ball of the foot. So we can make the postulate quite clear. When the forward seat is spoken of, it is the advocacy of balance from the foot throughout the parabola of the leap. We can now begin to examine the contentions which are constantly raised in its disfavour. Some, wishing to avoid the pitfalls of reasoned argument and hoping by a thrust from an unexpected quarter to silence opposition, point out that as Fred Archer, Bay Middleton, Tom Firr, and other well-known riders of the past were able to perform such prodigies when using the old-fashioned seat, any change would appear to be not only unnecessary but immodest. To these there can be but one answer: the part of *laudator temporis acti* can be carried so far that all progress or improvement becomes abhorrent.

A very large number of people think it is not only very uncomfortable landing in this way, but that there is positive danger, especially if the horse pecks or there is a drop fence. This is a point much more worth discussing than the previous one, and we will go into it as fully as possible.

Firstly, let us visualise what happens to the rider whose body



THIS IS THE FORWARD SEAT.

is back when his horse pecks. As the peck takes place the rider naturally leans further back still, so as to overcome the jar of impact, if he can. If he does, let us see what happens. He must let the reins slip through his fingers, so that at the very moment when the horse requires collecting, the rider is incapable of doing so, and cannot, in fact, do anything until he has gathered his reins up again. He has, by leaning back, placed weight upon the loins, which is the one part that should be free of any pressure, particularly at this juncture. So that, as far as the horse is concerned, he is making two faults. He cannot collect him or help him with the reins immediately after landing, and he is inconveniencing him by having his weight in the wrong place. So much for the horse. Now how about the rider? His body was back during the downward portion of the parabola. As he lands the body goes further back, and as the fulcrum has been taken from the foot and is centred on his seat bones with the whole weight on the back of the saddle and the feet stuck forward, he is entirely unbalanced. Good riders are able to counteract this tendency by absorbing the shock to a certain extent in the muscles of the knee, but the majority, not so adroit, take it on the stirrup irons—and a very serious strain it is. Before leaving this point it may be of interest to know how and why it is so many leathers break in racing and in point-to-points, etc., and why old racing hands are so anxious to see that they are new or nearly new before starting. The reason is nothing less than the jar the rider gives to them when landing over his fences with his feet forward. The strain is very great. It has been worked out that it is from three to five times the weight of the rider, and varies not as the rider but as the horse! A heavy horse causes a greater strain upon the leathers than a lighter one. This is a serious burden for the horse to take on his forelegs every time he lands over a fence, and the advocates of the backward seat have a good deal to explain away to get over this point. Again, as the rider's body is back, he is incapable of getting it forward again until after the peck is over, and has, therefore, no control over his body at this moment. If, therefore, the peck develops into almost a fall, the position of the

rider is perilous, and he is very frequently deposited, while the horse, at last relieved of the weight on the wrong place, recovers himself and goes on. I think this is a fair picture of the "backward" rider negotiating a fence when a "peck" takes place.

Now let us see how the "forward" seat man gets on. On landing, the horse has free loins and is therefore in a good position to recover himself. The rider has short reins, and as his body is balanced he has control of himself as well as his horse. He is in a position instantly to collect him and help him to his feet. The jar of impact is absorbed primarily in the muscles of the knee and ankle joints, and, secondly, by the hands which are then resting in the nape of the horse's neck. Any tendency that there may be to be pitched forward is with ease counteracted by these methods. This position is one of great importance to a hunting man, because, should he land into bog or cart ruts, or wish suddenly to avoid something hitherto unseen, he can do so in a way that would be utterly impossible with the backward seat.

The next point that is raised is that the forward seat may be, and undoubtedly is, very excellent for the show ring, but it is quite out of place in either the hunting field or the steeplechase. The answer to this is that there can be but one right way. Three constants are to be found in all forms of horsemanship, no matter where we are or what we are doing. The three are : (1) *The Horse*, which is still a horse, whether he canters in the show ring, extends himself in the steeplechase, or gallops in the hunting field ; (2) *gravitation*, which applies to everything at all times without variation ; (3) *motion, propulsion or dynamics*, what you will. These laws must also be obeyed, always. These three are our constants, no matter what we are doing. The variation is only of degree. The horse goes faster or slower, jumps higher or shorter as may be, and what is right for the small jump must also be right in a greater degree for the big jump. There can be no alteration in fundamentals. Gravity is again a constant. There is a greater force of impact when landing over a big fence than over a small one, but

PLATE IX.



ALTHOUGH THE RIDER IS LEANING FORWARD, THIS IS *NOT* THE FORWARD SEAT.

The strain upon the stirrup leathers in this position on landing is very great. The rider's knees should be pointed, and the shock of impact absorbed in the muscles of the knee joint.

the law is the same. Propulsion is a case of degree once more. There is more dynamic force when jumping a fence in a steeplechase than in the hunting field, but the difference is of degree alone. If, therefore, a principle has been found correct in one form of riding, it is *correct for all*. If we have discovered the right seat in the *manège*, then it is the right seat for all and every form of horsemanship whatever. It is said that it may be easy enough to sit a horse forward in the show ring, but to do it in a race is quite another story. This argument is like saying $2 \times 2 = 4$, but $2 \times 2 \times 2$ does not equal 8.

Curiously enough, the difficulty does not increase with speed. To jump a fence "all out" is much easier than to jump one in a collected manner, and the most difficult feat of all is to jump one from a standstill.

The reason for this is merely the question of variation of speeds.

If we are standing in a railway carriage and the train goes off with a jerk, we are all precipitated into the laps of the seated passengers. But if the train is travelling at 40 miles an hour and it is increased to 60 miles an hour, we hardly notice any difference.

So it is in riding. The horse that walks up to a fence and jumps suddenly increases his speed with a jerk from, say, 4 miles per hour to a pace equal to 20 miles an hour; but if he is galloping at his fence, the variation is perhaps only from 30 miles an hour to 35 miles per hour, which is a very different proportion.

Consequently the faster the leap the easier it is.

Landing has already been dealt with. The jar is not so great for either horse or rider when the body is forward. But if he thinks the horse is going to peck on landing, it must be remembered he is master of his fate and captain of his body (which the back rider is not), and he can restrain himself from leaning forward if he wishes. Not that it is to be recommended as a habit, but he at least does maintain his own volition. For instance, when a horse jumps sooner than he is expected to, the rider is forced to lean back, but if he keeps his feet back and his knees pointed he can adjust himself immediately the horse's fore-legs touch the ground. It should

also be pointed out that, supposing English people cannot perform this feat without danger of falling off, it is done, and has been done for years, abroad. It is no new "stunt" that is being advocated; it has been adopted on the Continent and in America for generations.

The final argument is that it puts too great a strain upon the horse's forelegs. Let us examine this for a moment. This means that if a rider leans back, less of him reaches the ground than if he sits forward. If so, where! oh where! has the little bit gone? No, no. This argument is the final stand of the last ditcher, but it is no stronghold. If we weigh 11 stone and jump up into the air off our feet, we land, no matter in what position, with the weight on our feet of that 11 stone plus the force of gravity. Nothing can make it less, try as we will. So it is in riding; and if the seat be forward, it cannot possibly be more than it would be if it were back. Should, however, the rider be left behind at all and come down thump on the saddle or into the stirrups, then, indeed, it can be more, because the rider has jumped higher than the horse and has to come down further. Although we cannot increase our weight by leaning forward, we can reduce the jar by "deferred impact," or by absorbing the concussion in the muscles of the knee and ankle in a way the backward seat cannot do. So the advocates of the backward seat must be very cautious how they trot out this contention, as it quickly reacts upon themselves.

This concludes the arguments which have been used against this modern form of horsemanship. But paper alone has never gained a victory; cogency in argument often vexes rather than convinces. So we do not ask the hunting man who has ridden many years in the old way to change his habits. We can only suggest to the younger generation that, if they will try the method advocated, they will find they will get better enjoyment out of their day's hunting, with fewer falls and greater confidence. Also they will find that they are doing their horses a great service, which they will appreciate to the full. Remember, the golden rule for the leap is: Head free and loins free.

Riding is, however, a complex art, and although it may be com-

THE RIGHT POSITION DURING A "PECK."



PLATE X.

knees can only be done if the lower part of the leg is kept well back, as this diagram shows.

This is an important point, and should be thoroughly understood. It is this that enables the rider to ride over "drop" fences with comparative ease, and to overcome the difficulty of collecting a horse after a "peck."

This question of the drop fence is nearly always brought up by

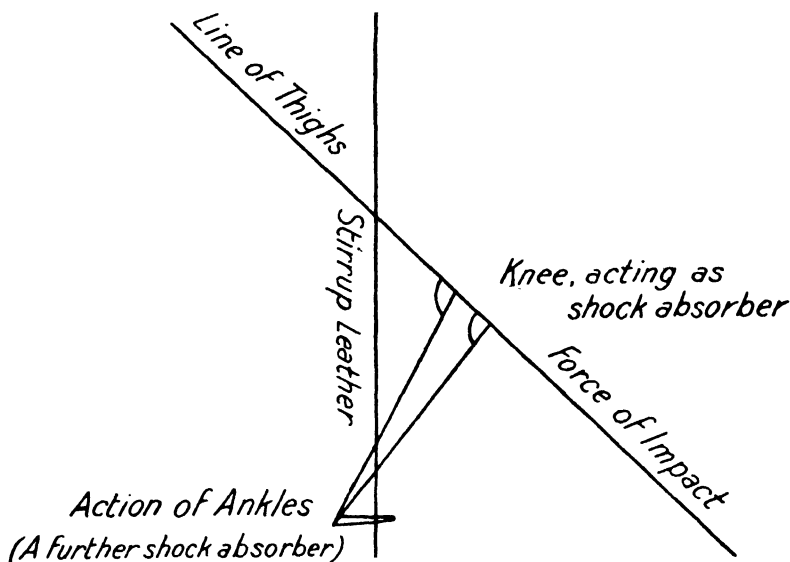


FIG. 18.

the "back seat" advocates, so that it is necessary for me to give the point rather more attention than it really deserves.

No one likes a drop fence at any time, and everyone avoids them as much as possible. We do, of course, have to tackle them now and then, so, although not of first importance, the question must be considered.

In Continental show jumping courses they often have drop fences usually succeeded by an "up" fence, making an "in and out." The dimensions are, roughly: the first fence 3 feet 4 inches in height with a drop of 1 foot 8 inches (making a 5-foot fall from

PLATE XII.



THIS IS A POSITION WE ALL GET INTO SOMETIMES WHEN THE HORSE TAKES OFF A LITTLE SOONER THAN EXPECTED.



THIS IS THE OLD-FASHIONED SEAT.

Those who think they are saving their horse's forelegs by leaning back should notice here, that the whole of the rider's weight is concentrated upon a line in continuation of the near fore, which must, therefore, be taking the fullest weight of the rider possible.

the top of the fence). The distance between the two is 23 feet and the jump out is over plain timber 4 feet 2 inches in height.

This, I may say, is an obstacle that would stop a good many of the field out hunting if they came across it.

But leaning back is never even contemplated by anyone, for it would spell disaster. To collect any horse in time to clear the formidable second fence off the hocks would be impossible in any other way.

If it is necessary, therefore, to lean forward when negotiating a very difficult obstacle, how can anyone suggest that we should lean back when tackling anything easier?

I was discussing the question of the forward seat a little while ago with a riding instructor, and as the views he gave are very much what many people hold, I quote them from memory :

"This seat is no doubt very useful at times, but it is absurd to lay down any hard and fast rules. Each fence has to be jumped in its own way, according to the style, action, and temper of the horse, and there are many occasions when the forward seat is impracticable."

Statements such as these are the enemy of progress and the bugbear of instruction.

They tell nothing and explain nothing. But the remark is perfectly correct as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. In fact, it leads us nowhither, and the pupils are just as much in the dark as before.

They only feel that if there are no rules they can do just as they please. This is why they take so long to become proficient. They have to learn from their own experience, instead of that of their instructor. In teaching, pupils must be taught. The instructor must be able to show them what is the perfect position during the leap, and the reasons for an imperfect one, and they themselves should have a practical grasp of what is actually required before they can be considered past the stage of pupilage.

Then, when they are crossing a country to hounds, they will be able to put their knowledge into practice. When they make an error

they will know it is an error. Perfection should always be the aim, even though it may seldom be attainable. But without the guiding rule the unfortunate tyro has nothing to take as a standard with which to compare his own efforts. Naturally, when out hunting, great precision is seldom so possible in riding at a fence as in the show-ring. It is this fact which has led many people to dispute the value of the balanced seat, and prefer to say that the waist of the rider should be so supple as to be able to adjust the body immediately.

With this point of view I do not disagree, as long as it is understood that it is *nothing* more than an adjustment. The rider's waist *must certainly* be supple and ready to act instantly as circumstances demand. The unexpected frequently occurs, and for this one must be ever prepared.

Many riding instructors advocate leaning forward on the approach and back on the land, and suggest that the body should remain throughout perpendicular to the ground.

The unsoundness of this conception will, I think, be readily admitted by all those who have followed me thus far.

In the first place, the rule for all athletics is to "follow through," whether we are hitting a golf, cricket, tennis, or billiard ball, or an opponent in boxing; the "follow through" is the first and most important guiding rule.

There is no reason why riding should be any exception. The rider must go with the horse, and follow through all the time. But the idea of leaning back after having leant forward is like chopping a drive at golf.

The conception that the body should be vertical to the ground throughout cannot be given serious consideration. If we look at any photo or film of riders jumping, we can observe that there is no question whatever of perpendicularity occurring, except in rare instances which no one would wish to imitate.

When going down anything in the nature of a ravine which has a bank on the opposite side, it is very important that the rider should sit forward, so as to be ready for the spring (which often occurs unexpectedly) that the horse must make to get up the other side. Not

PLATE XIII.



ALWAYS LEAN FORWARD WHEN GOING DOWN STEEP PLACES.

only should the rider sit forward, but for the same reason he must hold his reins very short. Failure in this has resulted in many a mishap, which could easily have been avoided. (See Plate XIII.) Although the practice of sitting back over steep places has been very prevalent in the past, particularly in the Devon and Somerset country, the Continental riders have proved their theories to the full, and can demonstrate the fact that horses do go better with the rider sitting forward no matter how steep the place may be, but it does require practice and resolution.

On the Continent (especially with the Italians) going down steep places is made a speciality, and although almost incredibly difficult places are negotiated the backward seat is never contemplated.

In order that the horse should be able to use himself effectively they maintain that the extra weight upon the fore-legs is nothing compared with the advantage of giving him a free loin and a free head.

V

THE APPROACH

If your horse be well bred, and in blooming condition,
Both up to the country and up to your weight,
Oh, then give the rein to your youthful ambition,
Sit down in your saddle and keep his head straight.

WHAT is the secret of presenting a horse at a fence so that he will jump it off his hocks, land a comfortable distance the other side, and give what is known as a "good feel"? Generally speaking, we find that with two fences out of three, although we manage to get over all right, we are aware that the horse was out of his stride and jumped off his forehand. When this occurs, we experience not a feeling of pleasure, but one of relief when we find ourselves safely on the other side. Sometimes we give him a jab in the mouth, say "Come hup," and call him an expletory *quadruped*; we seldom, if ever, put the blame on the right shoulders. *On the other hand, when he does come up to the fence in his stride, springs off his hocks and lands well into the next field, what a different sensation it is, and how it adds to the pleasure and safety of hunting!*

It is generally believed that it is too much to expect any man to reach the standard of being sure of his horse's stride every time, and hunting people generally are content with things as they are, and do not worry about these matters over-much. But there are many who delight in riding for riding's sake, and who are not content with anything less than perfection. It is for these that the study of the art of approach becomes fascinating, particularly as it is, probably, one of the most difficult arts. The reason for this is that we have to ride every horse in a slightly different way. Some horses are very easy, and when riding them we fancy we have mastered the problem,

only to find ourselves woefully at sea when we get on to some less temperate mount. Fortunately, the rules are the same in all cases ; it is only the application which presents the difficulty. Our first trouble is that our horses have seldom been really schooled. The “made hunter ” will certainly jump well enough, but we want something much more than that. We want him temperate, balanced and obedient to both leg and rein. This is a standard that can only be attained by continuous work and good horsemanship for many months. It is beyond the opportunity of some, or the inclination of others ; but no matter. But if we know what to try for every time we take a fence, then each jump will be one more progressive experience.

Let us, first of all, realise what we ought not to do. Take the instance of a rider going to jump a rather big fence. We often see him getting what he calls a “good run ” at it. He starts off very fast. Very likely he hits his horse as a preliminary, so as to “get going ” all the quicker. This, of course, only does harm. It excites the horse and distracts his attention. So off he goes at a fast gallop. As he approaches the fence, the horse, realising it looks rather formidable, is thinking (if he is allowed to think) how he is going to take off. We have often seen athletes when jumping taking a lot of little steps in their endeavour to get their take-off right. They are losing momentum thereby, and the fault is much criticised by trainers. This is what the horse is doing. He gets slower and slower until he reaches the fence. By this time he is often almost at a standstill, and bucks over. If there is a ditch on the far side, he may easily peck badly on landing, and the rider can congratulate himself if the incident is closed without mishap.

Then we have another kind—that of a fine free horse, of great leaping capacity. He goes “all out.” No check or change about him. When about 12 feet away from the fence, another stride would put him too close ; so, full of fun and freedom, he takes off from there. Alas ! the rider is quite unprepared for such scope and courage. He is badly “left behind,” and the horse gets a terrible jab in the mouth. A few more of those, and the horse will jump

with freedom no more, and a great-hearted horse is temporarily spoilt. These are examples of how not to do it.

We will now examine the requirements for the perfect leap. The first necessity is to have a temperate horse. No one can steady with any accuracy horses that are excited at every fence. Consequently our first essential is control. Our second is that of growing momentum, so that when we have decided to "put" our horse at the fence (which is at a distance of about 30 feet or so, according to the size of the jump), each stride should be of increasing dimension. In this way we get the impetus on taking off to throw us well into the next field, clear of all hidden ditches or obstacles. It can well be described as :

Umpity, umpity, umpity, one, two, three, over !

— = ≡

In other words, a steady canter up to the last three strides, and then one—two—THREE. Diagrammatically we can show it thus :

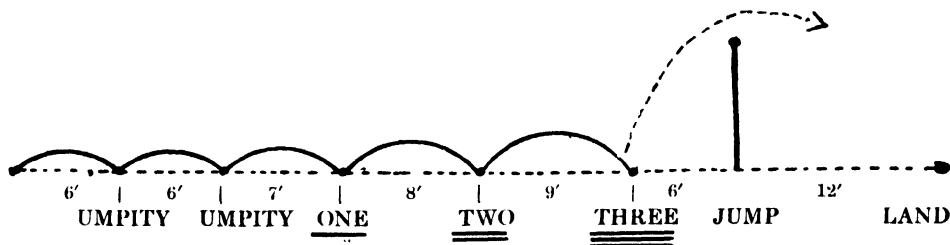


FIG. 19.

This is, of course, perfection. We have control up to 30 feet, then increasing impetus, a perfect take-off 6 feet from the obstacle, and a pleasurable land 12 feet the other side. That is what we should endeavour to do with every fence we meet out hunting. We shall not succeed, but with practice and training we shall improve every day. We shall not always be able to make three good strides. We may have to fit it in with two. It rather reminds me of dactyls and spondees. We may have a long and two shorts, two shorts and a long, perhaps, or two longs. We might even make up Latin

PLATE XIV.



THE RESULT OF LACK OF MOMENTUM IN THE "APPROACH."

verses as we go along. It would be an inspiring novelty to hear the huntsman chant

“ Ārma[˘] vir|um[˘]que can[˘]|o ”

or a whipper-in mutter

“ Vīdē|ō meli|ora prō|boque ”

on approaching their fences! And yet we require our cadences just as much in equitation as in elegiacs. Fortunately for many of us, an equally good result can be obtained in English, and I can suggest the following exhortation, with mental rather than verbal expression, and an increasing accent on the “longs,” thus :

“ Now come a[˘] long and ge[˘]t | o ver.”

This gives a good idea of the final strides, with the spring on the first syllable of “over.” When you have misjudged the perfect pacing it must be remembered that it is better to increase the stride and get the horse to jump rather further away than you intended instead of decreasing the stride and losing momentum. In other words, supposing you have started to put the horse at the fence a

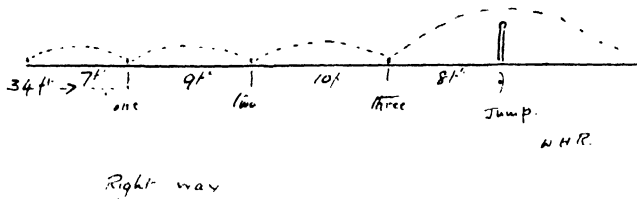


FIG. 20.

little too soon, don't check the pace in order to put in four strides, but push on and try and do it in three. The diagrams (Figs. 20 and 21) will show the right way and the wrong way of approaching the jump when you have started rather too far away, say at 34 feet distance instead of the correct 30 feet, but we shall not find it always possible to try it in the hunting field. We shall often find that the

crowd will not give us room, and we have to get over as best we may. Sometimes we shall find that when we want to go "umpity" the horse does not. Sometimes he will "yaw" at us and drag the reins through our fingers. Sometimes he will insist on racing at the fence, and we shall be unable to restrain him. But no matter. If the horse is not thoroughly trained these things will happen. But as long as we know what we want to do, we are a long way ahead of him "who knows not, and knows not that he knows not."

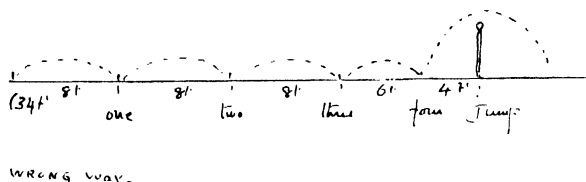


FIG. 21.

People often speak of "lifting" a horse, and others of "giving the office," but they are sometimes not quite sure of what they mean. It is, really, the moment at which control changes to freedom. As we approach the fence we must have restraint and exercise (if we can) a guiding influence upon the movements and stride of our mount. But when we come to the moment when we decide the horse should "take off," then we should lean our bodies forward, and give him his head. A slight pressure of the knees will also assist the horse to realise what is required. Even with badly trained horses, once they are assured that they will have a free head they will very soon learn to "take off" when given the "office" in this way. The "short one" so many horses put in before jumping is the penalty we have to pay for riders who do not "go" with their horses as they jump, get left behind, and then jab their mouths. It is wonderful how quickly horses will drop the habit directly they feel confident that their rider will give them the necessary freedom.

Out hunting, this question of the approach is nothing like so difficult as it is in the show-ring, where precision is so essential; and it is in attempting to attain this precision that we often fall into error.

It may be that, in our anxiety to get our 30 feet distance right, we “nig” our horse too much. In other words, we shorten his stride to such an extent in the “umpities” that, when we do get it right, there is no impetus to get over with.

On the other hand, supposing we do not study the 30-foot mark too closely, but bring the horse along with a good swinging gallop, we find that we are often so wrong in the stride we can only “crash” or pull up.

The solution of these difficulties lies in the happy medium, but first of all we must train our horse to have scope.

By scope I mean the confidence the horse has to jump whenever asked, and from any distance up to 12 feet away from the jump.

If we have trained our horses to be sticky, so that unless they take off 6 feet away they refuse, bungle, or put in a short stride, then our teaching has been faulty.

But let us suppose we have trained our horse to be a truly free jumper, so that he can easily take off and clear the fence well at any distance up to 12 feet or so, then we have sufficient margin to ride him at the obstacle with much greater confidence. We know that he can jump anywhere from 6 to 12 feet away, and that knowledge and training will win us prizes in the show-ring and give us a perfect ride across a natural country.

But this scope can be attained only by giving the horse so much freedom during the last two strides that he is able to lower his head and thus balance himself correctly for the leap.

I feel sure, the longer I ponder over these matters, that the troublesome little half-fault in the show-ring that costs the owner so much disappointment is far more due to lack of balance than to carelessness on the part of the horse.

It is generally supposed that it is necessary to “rap” a horse before going into the show-ring, so as to insure his lifting his feet well.

I may have been lucky, but I have not found this effective in any way.

If we observe those horses closely which have been trained to

great freedom of the head, we see that they are able to clear their fences so easily, the question of "touching" seldom comes into the picture.

The law of self-preservation applies just as much to horses as to ourselves. If we are going to jump something, our inclination is to do so without touching it, lest we fall or stumble, and I believe that every horse has the same inclination; he fails only because he has been wrongly put at the fence.

This method of "approaching," although perfect when it comes off, is undoubtedly difficult. It requires much practice on the part of the rider, and a high standard of schooling.

For Show Jumping there are two schools of thought. One is the "approach" or "timing" system, which this chapter has fully explained, and the other is what I might call the French style, by which you give the horse full freedom of head, and let him take off when and where he chooses. That this system has proved itself successful no one can deny. But for comfort, satisfaction and elegance there is no comparison.

VI

“HANDS”

His hand was like a chamois glove,
And riding was his chief delight.

THE question of “hands” is not nearly so intricate or subtle as many people suppose. There is nothing supernatural, or even intuitive, in it; it is a matter of nothing more or less than adaptability. How often we hear, “‘Hands’ are born, not made,” “Born with good ‘hands,’” “The gift of good ‘hands,’” and similar expressions, which all have a sufficient element of truth in them for acceptance by those who do not wish or have not the time to probe into verities deeply. These expressions in themselves might be allowed to stand, were they entirely harmless; but, unfortunately, they have a knack of giving false impressions to the uninitiated and of damping their aspirations.

To those who unhesitatingly accept this doctrine it suggests that no rider who starts late in life can have good “hands,” that it is necessary to be practically born in the saddle to possess them, and that no amount of schooling or tuition or practice on their part will make any difference. In consequence, the outlook is hopelessly unpromising.

As a matter of fact, it matters not *when* our riding starts, but *how*. Although “hands” are born, in the sense that attributes like intelligence, strength, courage, etc., are born, the rest is entirely a matter of instruction and experience.

Then, again, we have another side to the misappreciation of the dictum. Have we not heard people (very often ladies) claim to have good “hands,” when all they do is to leave their horses entirely alone, relying upon good manners in their mount to see them through? These people suffer from the mistake that, if “hands” are

born, it requires neither instruction nor knowledge to perfect what is already inherent, and that "hands" is nothing more than slack reins and a delicacy of expression amounting almost to timidity.

So let us see if we can express this obscurity in such a way as to clear up the subject and arrive at a definite understanding as to what "hands" really are.

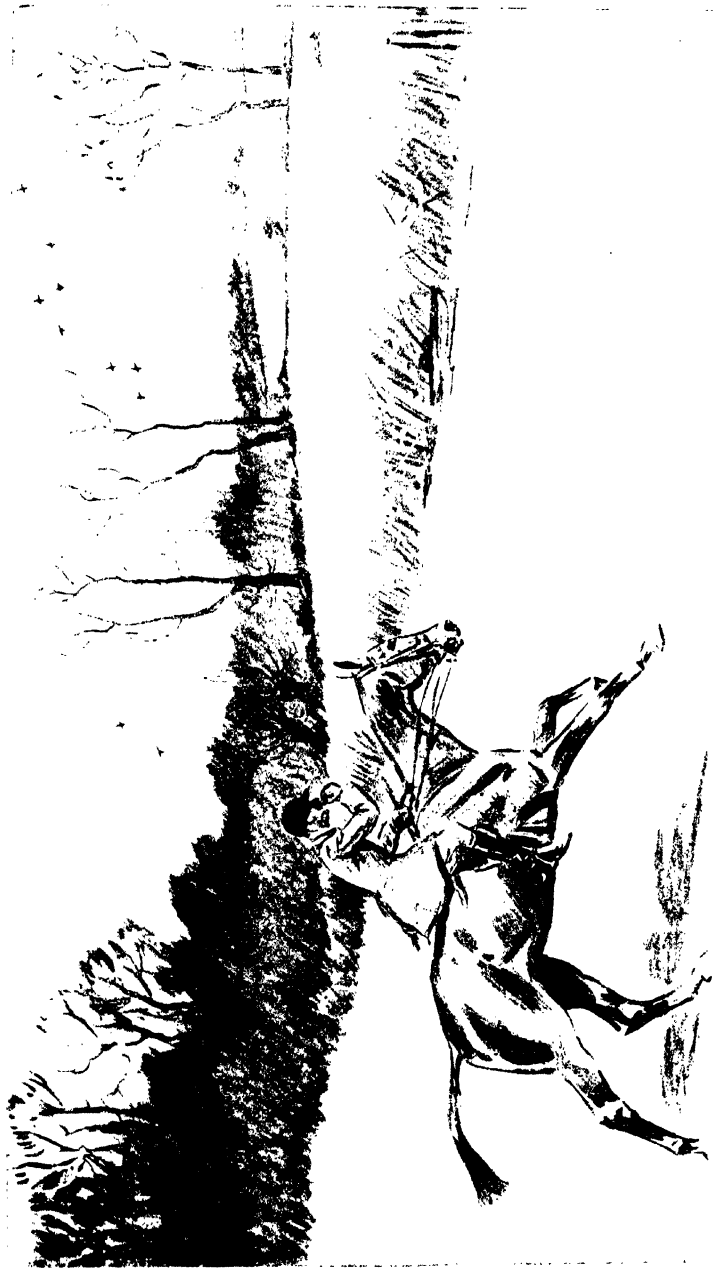
It is not so difficult to explain as would at first appear. It is a trinity composed of balance, confidence and sympathy—each of which, be it noted, may be learned.

The first point, balance, is easy to discuss. When a rider is off his balance, the tendency is to hang on to something, and the probability is that it will be the reins. This fault occurs to us all, whether we are accomplished or not : we all are sometimes off our balance, and we all find ourselves, sometimes unwittingly, hanging on to the horse's mouth. We notice it very often in the photographs of jockeys riding steeplechases, where, in the midst of the leap, they are "left behind" and can only remain on the "plate" by the use of the reins. It is easy to see this. A horse naturally jumps with his mouth closed. Look at the jumping photographs which, in the season, appear almost daily, and see how few horses keep their mouths shut. This is an instance of bad "hands," just as much as that of the tyro who has lost his balance at the trot and is attempting to retain his seat by a firm hold on the bridle. However good the rider's "hands" may be in ordinary circumstances, and no matter how accomplished he may be, at this particular moment his "hands" are bad, because he is off his balance.

So let the beginner take confidence once more, for no one can have perfect "hands" until perfect balance is attained. But, at the same time, in all ordinary circumstances, such as the trot and the canter and the small leap, it is not difficult to attain a balance which may be described as faultless.

We will not go deeper into this subject in the present chapter, because the attributes of balance have been already dealt with in Chapter I. We will content ourselves with the statement that,

PLATE XV.



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"GOOD HANDS" ARE DEPENDENT UPON BALANCE, CONFIDENCE, AND SYMPATHY.

so long as a man retains his balance in the saddle, he possesses *ipso facto* the first attribute of “hands.”

The next point is that of confidence. A rider may have a perfect balance, but, lacking “nerve,” it is worth nothing. There is nothing so soul-destroying to the horse as the nervous twitch upon the reins, and it is this, perhaps, more than anything else, that makes refusers and jibbers. I remember how a very high-couraged hunter in Leicestershire some years ago carried his owner supremely for two seasons without making a mistake. The horse was sold, and the new owner never got him outside the stable yard. Here was a case of lack of confidence. He was generally accepted in the ordinary way as a good rider, but he was not confident in his new mount, and his nervousness betrayed it. He soon sold the horse at a loss to another man who did not experience the same difficulty, as the horse went perfectly well with him.

We see the same thing very frequently in the approach to a fence. The man who cannot keep his hands still has his nerves to blame; he has not the necessary confidence. It has an immediate reaction upon the horse, and it works in this way: No horse minds restraint during the approach—in fact, it is usually necessary; but he must realise that when the leap does come he will have freedom. Consequently, the steady, firm hold before the jump is not what he minds—in fact, it gives him confidence. What he really minds is the feeling that when he does jump he is going to get a jab in the mouth, and the rider’s uncertainty as he approaches the fence tells the horse at every stride what the consequences are bound to be when he makes his leap. The natural jumper of high courage will quickly be brought to refusing persistently when ridden in this manner. Consequently, confidence is the second attribute of “hands.”

We place sympathy last in our trio because, if a rider has acquired both balance and confidence, he has gone far in the art of horsemanship. Confidence means so much that many a bold horseman becomes almost first-class, even though he may be a bit of a “butcher.” As Lord Pembroke says, “the hand is best whose

indications are so clear that the horse cannot mistake them, and whose gentleness and fearlessness alike induce obedience." But to be actually first-class he must have the charming gift of sympathy. It includes patience and thoughtfulness, and understanding, and knowledge. We can have no real sympathy without all these attributes. We must be able to understand what the horse is thinking, to think "objectively," or, in other words, to be able to put ourselves in his position. Under this category, let us take the example of the horse that will not walk. The rider who is out of sympathy gets impatient and is constantly jabbing him in the mouth. It does not have the effect intended—it has, in fact, the reverse effect, and a vicious circle is created. The horse arrives home in a "muck sweat" and the rider in a bad temper. However well such a man may ride his horse across country, no one would accord him the virtue of good "hands." Hence, we see that the third main attribute is sympathy. If he were the first-class rider we may paint him, he would try to understand why the horse would not walk. It might be that the horse was a youngster full of the *joie de vivre*, in which case patience is the only cure; it might be that there was a horse in front causing excitement—in that case thoughtfulness might effect something, and the rider might wait until the leading horse was out of sight. It might be that the horse was thinking of his manger and was anxious to get home. Then, with understanding we can become both patient and sympathetic. Finally, it might be due to a pinched wither, or ill-fitting bit, and this is where knowledge comes to our aid.

So these are the three salient points in the mysterious art of "hands"; but we cannot leave the subject without going a little further.

No one can be said to have good "hands" who has not understood the subtleties of combining hand and leg. A horse "behind his bridle" is one where the hand is used proportionately with greater strength than the leg, as in the case of a sluggish horse. A horse "into his bridle" is one that can soon be made a puller, if care is not exercised by judicious handling. The art of handling a horse

is that of producing the perfect adjustment between leg and rein, whereby without apparent effort the horse will obey the rider instantaneously. It is no good talking about “good hands” until by study of equitation we can produce such results. The hunting man who hacks along a road on a trusty hunter with a loose rein is not displaying good “hands,” any more than a beginner on a wooden horse. He may have all the attributes of hands—balance, confidence, and sympathy—but at that moment he is not riding, he is being merely conveyed, and, so far as equitation goes, he must not, on such an occasion, be taken as an example. He is riding at rest and, as a horseman, is a negative quantity while so doing. “Hands” are not exemplified by the loose rein, but by delicate contact, which can be attained in practice by almost anyone who is determined to improve.

Finally, we must deal with the question of pulling. It is often asked in what way can good “hands” prevent a keen horse from going faster than is wanted. The answer is that it is not so much a question of “hands” as of experience. When we are riding a keen horse, we must shorten our reins and keep them short—a difficult matter; we should ride a hole shorter in our stirrup leathers and avoid a dead pull on the mouth. The keener the horse the more we should hold him with our knees, remembering always that strength should be exerted primarily by the legs.

The keen horse becomes a puller when the riding has been such that he does not understand what is required of him. A constant dead pull on the mouth at slow paces can only be increased inappreciably as the horse goes faster, but the fact of it being there gives pain, and the horse’s instinct is to gallop away from the discomfort. The pull remains and the animal is usually unaware that the rider wishes him to stop. A horse properly ridden may be keen, but he will never “pull,” for the simple reason that the expert rider does not pull at him. It is often asked by beginners how this is accomplished. They say: “I don’t want to pull at a horse, but if I don’t he will get away with me.” The reply to this very important question is that the good rider sees that he keeps his horse’s head up and never allows

him to get on his forehand, for be it noted that no horse will run away if he is kept upon his hocks.

The best rule when riding a keen horse is to let him gallop on, under the control of the legs, until you want him to stop. Then, by word of mouth and the usual "aids," tell him firmly what is wanted, and it will be found that the horse, after all, is an intelligent animal and not the utter fool many unsympathetic riders would have us believe.

It is here where we have the three gifts of "hands" well exemplified: the balance which alone enables us to control; the confidence to let him gallop on; and the sympathy which gives us the comprehension of the desires, the thoughts, the eagerness and the generosity of the animal which would carry us so well if we could only understand. Let us remember that in riding the legs are worth 70 per cent. and the hands only 30 per cent.

Perhaps I cannot do better in concluding this chapter than by quoting the following French and English maxims:

"A good hand gives when the horse takes, and takes when he gives. A well-trained hand gives when the horse gives, and takes when he takes, and that instantly."—FILLIS.

"The arching of the wrists is conducive to light handling of the reins, and produces an elastic feeling which the horse appreciates."—SWIRE.

"Peu de mains, et beaucoup de jambes. Main fixe, reins tendues, et jambes actives et constantes."

"Immobilité du bras, souplesse des poignets."

"La main indique le mouvement, et les jambes le font exécuter."

"La légèreté à la main est donnée par les jambes et par les éperons près des sangles."

VII

“LANE JUMPING”

And whether it be on the grass-land,
The hillside, the heather, or loam,
Let the gallant ones keep going for'ard,
The slow ones can carry me home.

The Last Fence.

FOR training young horses to jump, a system known as “lane jumping” is very prevalent, not only in this country, but also on the Continent. For those who may not know exactly what this system is, I will give a few lines of explanation. A series of unbreakable fences are erected and enclosed by high barriers on each side, so as to form a narrow lane, along the whole length of the course. The horse is put inside the lane and made to gallop down it, jumping the fences as he does so. On completion of the course, he is patted and given some food, so as to make him, as far as possible, enjoy the experience.

At first sight the idea seems an excellent one. The horse learns to jump with freedom and assurance. He gets to understand that the obstacles cannot be trifled with. If he falls, there is no rider to hurt, and there is no one on his back to give him jabs in the mouth or to interfere with him in any way. But if we examine the matter a little further, our convictions seem to weaken and the excellence of the system becomes less apparent.

In the first place, the young horse put in for the first few times has to be driven down the lane by brandishing whips, by shouting, etc. The horse, instead of thinking of what he is doing, has his eye on the whip, and he can hardly be said to enjoy his early experiences of the lane. The fact that a piece of sugar awaits him at the other end is hardly a sufficient compensation. If the horse refuses, as he frequently does to begin with, he can be got over,

as a rule, only by a very positive use of the whip, which, again, is an unsound method of introducing a horse to a fence.

Once the horse is in the lane, we cannot control his habit of jumping or guide his style. Generally speaking (in all the earlier stages, certainly, and even later on, probably), the horse approaches the fence "diminuendo," and, after having jumped it, is inclined to stop. He has to be induced to continue the operation by the only method possible. This starts the horse off in a bad style of jumping. Set off at a gallop by the use of the whip, or by shouting, or waving the arms, he decreases his pace as he approaches the fence. That is the first great error the horse begins to learn. He then alters his stride, and puts in a short one, and that is the second bad error, while the probability is that he also jumps off his fore-hand. The trouble is that none of these mistakes can be rectified, except by the long process of increasing the speed and confidence of the horse until he learns to stand well away from his fences. But the improvement has much more to do with the temperament of the horse than with the instruction.

Let us now suppose that after several weeks the horse jumps the lane freely and confidently, without touching any of the fences. What have we taught him? We have taught him to jump in his own way, to take off haphazard, and to do just whatever he likes. This might be of use, supposing there were prizes for free jumping, or the horse was being trained for the circus, but when the only value of our schooling is to get horse and rider to act together, it seems a somewhat bad start to train independently.

It is universally admitted that a horse to jump well must jump off his hocks. The lane teaches him to jump as he chooses. If we were going to train a boy to jump, we should never dream of allowing him to practise by himself, and to get into all kinds of bad habits. On the contrary, we would work at him with meticulous care, in poising his body, placing his legs, and checking the actions of his arms and head. As it is with men, so, surely, should it be with horses. Consequently, it seems to me that even when we have achieved success in the lane, we are not only no further on in our

schooling, but we are actually further back, because we have to start now by eradicating the mistakes we have allowed to grow, and by beginning to teach the horse to obey the rider, instead of doing everything on his own initiative.

This is of no value, however well we could get a horse to jump “on his own.” The first principle of training is obedience to the hand and leg of the rider, and in this particular it is the only safety. Imagine ourselves out hunting, and we come to a fence where we must control our horse to avoid an accident, but the horse will only jump in his own way!

Let us suppose, however, that this lane jumping is a good form of training. Even then its advantages are obscure, because, by taking a horse straight away to the ordinary jump with a rider on his back, equally good results can be obtained in half the time, as I have frequently proved. While, finally, the erection of the lane is a very costly business, and unless it is kept in good condition, is often a positive danger.

Taking all these points into consideration, I think it must be admitted, even by those who uphold the practice, that its advantages are at least doubtful. Personally I believe that a horse should seldom be taken to a fence without a man on his back. The only exception to this rule is when foals are taught to follow the dam over a fence, etc. But this is before they have been taken up. If we start with the bar on the ground, and slowly raise it as the horse's confidence increases; if we teach him to “take off” only when the rider decides; if we teach the “crescendo” method of approach, and the collection before the approach, we shall find that we will progress much faster than if we have spent our time in allowing our horses to jump in an untutored way.

Most horses will jump, when free, over quite large fences, but utterly fail when being ridden over even much smaller ones. It is this fact which has led many trainers to the belief that if the rider will only leave the horse entirely alone, he will jump anything. There are two objections to this point of view. The first is that it is the abrogation of horsemanship to allow oneself to be the

complete "passenger." The rider must always be the controlling factor. The second is that horses do not jump so well because they are not quite sure in their minds who is in control.

These remarks do not seem to apply if the fences are easy ones, when a horse can "take off" almost wherever he likes. But if we watch free jumping, as we so often can at the Royal Tournament, when the riders jump without reins, etc., we will see that many horses frequently touch, and sometimes bungle, the fence—a fact which would hardly be conducive to confidence, if we were to face the horse at a stiff five-barred gate, however well we know he could jump it.

The free jumping in a lane certainly gets horses to jump freely without the fatal jab in the mouth from indifferent riders. It also helps to strengthen a horse's muscles and to accustom him to leaping, without the jar on his legs the weight of a rider imposes on them. But if the training and riding are upon sound lines, I do not think it is necessary to go to the expense of putting up costly lanes, because excellent results can be obtained by more direct methods.

VIII

THE SCHOOLED HUNTER

He loved the English countryside,
The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,
The lichen on the apple trees,
The poultry ranging on the lees.

IT is the privilege of few to be in a position to school and train their own hunters. A large proportion spend their autumns away and return only for the hunting season, and others are too busy to give the necessary time. Even those who have the time often have not the skill, the knowledge, or the inclination. Consequently, a great many hunting people have to trust entirely to the dealer from whom the horse is purchased and to the groom who rides him at exercise. This being the case, it is not surprising that the standard of training is low and that it is the exception to see a properly schooled horse in the hunting field. It is, in fact, not clear to many people what is actually required of a horse that is as thoroughly schooled as he should be. As long as he jumps when required, without falling unduly, and does not run away or buck or kick, is not too impetuous, and is a comfortable ride, that is generally all that is expected. Indeed, there is little more that can be done in the ordinary way, because the higher levels of excellence can be attained only by much study and training, both on the part of the horse and the rider.

Of what avail would it be for the dealer to spend months in bringing his horses to a high pitch of excellence if the purchasers were unacquainted with those higher flights of horsemanship which are necessary in such circumstances? We cannot have perfection in the horse without excellence in the rider. Without the latter all the training which has produced the former is thrown away. But, however keen the owner may be, unless he can afford the time it

must always be impossible for him to attain anything more than the general level of horsemanship, and if a standard of safety and enjoyment is reached, there is little more that can be done. It is, therefore, in no spirit of criticism that these lines are penned. They are merely intended to help anyone who has the time to devote to the making of his hunters and who is anxious to get a fuller enjoyment out of his day's sport than before.

First of all, let us see what a hunter should and should not do. He should not rush his fences, he should not refuse, he should jump off his hocks and not his forehead; in other words, he should give the rider "a feel." He should have sufficient impetus to land well into the next field, so as to avoid any hidden ditch or other obstacle, without being too keen. He should not be sticky or jump from a standstill unless required, and as he approaches the fence his momentum should be increasing until the take-off, and not decreasing as we so often see. He should understand the meaning of a blind ditch, and he should be so handy that he can be turned off the road to jump a fence whenever required. He should be a good hack and understand the "aids," and he should have learnt to bridle and carry himself in a balanced manner and not have his nose stuck out like a poker. He should be accustomed to hounds, and should understand the opening and closing of gates. He should be quiet to mount wherever and whenever required, and have learnt both to walk and trot collectedly. He should allow other horses to gallop past him without thinking it a race meeting, and yet he should be keen enough to gallop on without urging. If these are our requirements, it is wonderful how much can be done towards their attainment by careful work during the cubbing season, especially if a paddock is available which can be used as an open *manège*.

Schooling can best be done in a paddock where two or three suitable jumps, without wings, and with adjustable bars, have been erected in convenient places in the centre of the field (not at the sides), so that the jumps can be taken from any direction. The rails need not be much higher than 2 feet 6 inches for even advanced schooling, while in the early stages they can be much lower. Get the horse



HE SHOULD BE WILLING TO JUMP AWAY FROM OTHER HORSES.

to jump off either leg at will from alternate reins, and if there is any attempt at rushing, turn him away. Continue to do this until the rushing ceases and he approaches the fence collectedly and temperately. Another way of correcting a horse from jumping intemperately is to put up a series of "in and outs" and school over them. Do not use furze jumps. They do no good; the only results they achieve are harmful. Do not be afraid your horse will sicken of being jumped too often. Provided the ground is soft, the fence is low, and he suffers no discomfort from the rider, plenty of jumping can be done, and it is important to jump often and every day so that the lessons can be learnt quickly and thoroughly. To teach the horse to jump blind ditches it may be necessary to manufacture one and lunge him over it. A very little experience will teach him to regard all such things with respect. I cannot leave this subject without referring to the ordinary schooling courses that are so prevalent and which are expensive and largely useless. Stiff uprights are fixed in the ground, and fences which are often too formidable are erected.

If the top rail is fixed it is dangerous, and if it is not fixed it requires one or two helpers to replace it when it is knocked down.

Furthermore, the fences are usually only rails or gates, etc. It is far better to school over fences with breadth than these up and down obstacles we so commonly see. As the uprights are immovable the ground in front of them gets quickly poached, and the "take off" is too hard in summer and too soft in winter. So in spite of the expense the course becomes largely useless.

It is preferable in consequence to have obstacles in your field which are portable, so that when the ground gets cut up they can be moved by hand easily. They should be fences not so much of height as of breadth. It only requires a little ingenuity and very little expense to produce a much more effective course.

For example, is there a fallen tree trunk handy? Or a suitable ditch between fields? Or, if there isn't a tree trunk, perhaps there is a wood stack from which an excellent jump can be made by tying the twigs together in the form of a fascine. Or again, a good jump can be made of sacks filled with twigs or dried leaves; and another

out of old barrels, which, as the training proceeds, can be made into rather formidable jumps.

We should remember that well-trained horses never refuse ; but in our training if we have a refuser the rule should be not to punish but to lower the rail. Also remember that a sharp spur has never taught a horse to jump. It is often said that a sharp spur is useful in the *manège*, but personally I think that the more one rides, the less one finds it necessary or desirable to use any spur at all.

It will be found very useful to mount from a block, because it teaches the horse not to fear having the rider on higher ground than himself. Horses so trained are much easier to mount in the open, because they have learnt to stand still where they are placed and not fidget about. The horse should learn to dissociate the feeling of the rider's foot in the stirrup with the idea of motion, and he should not be asked to move—in fact, should be restrained from moving—until the rider himself has picked up his reins properly and given his mount the proper “aid” for the walk.

Xenophon states : “The horse should be taught to stand when the rider is taking his seat and until he has drawn his skirts from under him.”

Do not forget the motto of the French, “Être tranquille, toujours tranquille,” also “Demander souvent. Savoir se contenter de peu.” These most excellent maxims are, I fear, only partially understood, even by the French themselves.

Everyone admits that we should ride quietly, and praise is not lacking for those who display this quality.

But still its full significance is not grasped by the riding public.

If a horse shows excitement or temper, it is usually because he has been wrongly handled.

Before a horse is fit to be taught anything he must be thoroughly placid, even to the degree of boredom. The well-trained hunter must show no excitement at the gallop or on seeing horses gallop past him. He must learn to walk whenever wanted.

To teach an impetuous horse to walk is a matter of much patience, as it is a question of the association of ideas. Horses

A WELL-TRAINED HORSE SELDOM REFUSES



are usually led to believe that the matter of carrying a rider on his back implies the excitement of the gallop, the leap, or the race, and as long as these are inseparable no improvement can ever be expected. With bad riders, who have indifferent hands or hasty tempers, the horse, alas! also associates being ridden with pain, and this is another fruitful cause of this troublesome habit. The quickest way to cure—or, I should say, allay—the habit is to take the animal out every day for long walks alone. Never trot or canter, but do everything possible to suppress any form of excitement. It will be found that even the worst offender will soon give up jogging, but, of course, the tendency will always be apparent again when anything exciting happens. With young horses we can only hope to improve, but not entirely to eradicate it. It is, however, a matter we can always work at, no matter how we are situated, because much can be done when hacking to or from a meet, or whenever we are in the saddle. It is a valuable lesson to remember that tranquillity and freedom from pain or annoyance spell comfort. Horses sometimes won't walk because they have a shoe which is pinching them, a bit that does not fit, or something which is rubbing them somewhere. So it is as well to look to these things, too, when we find our mount unusually intractable. If we think of all these points in the cubbing season and practise and school as much as we are able, it is wonderful how much can be done in a short time to improve both ourselves and our horses for the hunting season.

The question of “bridling” is somewhat complicated. We find that some horses with very light mouths and well set on necks “bridle” naturally, and very pleasant they are. But other horses either seem to have bad mouths or wooden necks, and don't give to the bit in the same way. These are not nearly so interesting to ride.

The question is, whether it is possible for the ordinary rider to get all horses to “bridle,” or whether it is a pure characteristic of each horse. The answer is not an easy one to give.

In the Army, where horses are bought young and put through a long course of schooling, it is rare to find a horse that does not make some show of “bridling.”

But with older horses the matter is much more difficult. A great deal depends upon the natural mouth.

People sometimes ask what "bridling" actually is and how it is attained.

It can be expressed in the following way : Bridling is the result of a true adjustment between the leg and rein—the leg being used for propulsion and the rein for restraint.

First, as we move off we press the horse with our legs "into his bridle." This action without the reins would very soon urge him into a gallop, but in proportion to the pressure of our leg, we use the restraining influence of the hand. This should cause the horse to bend his neck and play with his bit. When this occurs it is "bridling."

If the pressure on the rein is too strong for the "drive" given by the legs, then the horse is likely to become over-bent; if the pressure on the legs is too strong for the restraint given on the rein, then the flexion is not attained at all.*

It should be remembered that there are two distinct flexions a horse can make with his neck, and that a flexion is correct only when it comes from the poll. This gives the horse a true carriage, with the head properly placed.

But horses are quaint creatures. However much we try, some won't bridle naturally. Sometimes a horse will seem to "sulk" when going away from home, and will bridle happily only when he has his nose towards his manger!

But it is worth a great deal if we can get our horses to do it at all. The hack to the meet becomes a quite different thing to the usual jog-trot with a loose rein and no play upon the bit.

In fact, until we have ridden a well-schooled horse, who is obedient to the slightest pressure of leg or rein, and who will bridle not only at a walk but at a trot and canter, we really have not experienced the true pleasures of riding.

* See Chapter X.

IX

THE DIAGONAL

'Twere vain to tell the magic spell
That fires the hunter's eye.

EVERYBODY knows that, when a horse trots, the near fore and off hind touch the ground almost simultaneously, followed by the off fore and the near hind. It is a "two-step," in fact, making the difference between the "four-step" walk or the "three-step" canter. It is, therefore, known as the diagonal cadence.

When we rise in our stirrups during the trot, we do so on one or other of these two diagonals. That is to say, we rise as the near fore and off hind touch the ground, and sink on the off fore and near hind; or we rise from the throw of the off fore and near hind, and sink on to the near fore and off hind as they touch the ground. This sounds, perhaps, a little confusing; so, as the hind foot reaches the ground at practically the same moment as the fore foot, we can say that we rise on either the off fore and sink on the near fore, or *vice versa*. When a rider sinks on the near fore, that is described as being on the "near" diagonal, and when on the other foot, as being on the "off" diagonal.

When schooling a young horse, this is a point which is usually overlooked, and the horse gets into a habit of carrying his rider on one of these diagonals alone. As a horse can have a one-sided mouth, so can he have a one-sided body. When this is the case, the rider will find it awkward to ride on the unaccustomed side. If he succeeds for a stride or two, he will soon find that the horse will not have it, and before he knows where he is he will be back on the old diagonal. A horse's devices for "replacing" his rider are most amusing and interesting, and make even a dull hack

a matter of considerable interest. There are three usual ways. Perhaps the most common is for the horse to make the change himself, by putting in a half-stride, whereupon the rider finds himself very quickly "put in his place." This works very well as a rule; but if the trick is known and guarded against, then the next device is for the horse to "break." The rider checks him and brings him back to a trot, only to find he is back on to the diagonal the horse likes best. Another device is to shy at a heap of stones, or any old thing that will make an excuse, and "there we are again."

Of course, these little pleasantries of the road occur only when the rider knows exactly what is happening and is determined to ride upon the objectionable diagonal. There are a good many horses, usually those of the phlegmatic sort, who do not mind which diagonal they are ridden on; but unless they have been trained to be "double-sided," we shall find that one is much more comfortable than another. This is, of course, a fault. A properly schooled horse should go comfortably and readily on either. I remember on parade in the old days, I sometimes used to find my sword would swing in an uncomfortable way so that the hilt would catch me on the hip. It was long before I discovered that the reason was that I was on a different diagonal. Although this matter may appear to be one of small moment, such is not the case. The sinking of our bodies in the saddle exercises certain muscles in the horse's back, and if we always sink on one diagonal we use those muscles entirely, to the detriment of the other set of muscles. This fact will have no apparent effect when riding short hours in the saddle; but when we have long distances to go it is a matter of considerable importance, as, for example, during a long march with cavalry, when the question of fatigue is of great moment. But I fear it is a standard of horsemanship a little over the head of the average recruit as I have found out, sadly enough. In long-distance riding, such as used to be practised on the Continent, it is a well-known matter, and they usually ride by rule, such as a change every hour, or even every five kilometres. In this way the muscles on the horse's back get uniformly exercised and rested. But such

assistance could not, of course, be given unless the horse had been schooled to "double side."

So here is a little problem I will give my readers, the solving of which may make their next hack a very interesting one. You are sitting in the saddle at the walk. You want to trot. You decide from the first moment you rise from the saddle that you will start on a given diagonal. How is it done?

Then we have one more problem. You are trotting. Without check, how do you change from one diagonal to the other?

The answers are as follow : Before breaking into the trot, watch the movement of the horse's shoulder upon the side on which you wish to sink. As that shoulder is *back*, you rise and force the horse into the trot. Then it stands to reason that you will sink when that shoulder is forward, or, in other words, when that foot touches the ground.

The reply to the second problem is this : When the body is raised, all that is necessary is to check sinking for what appears to be a half-stride, and then continue as before. It will be found the change has been easily and simply effected, without interfering with the horse in any way.

These are two little exercises which will give an added zest to a hack, and make us, perhaps, understand more about what we are really doing when we ride than if we just trot along thinking of other things. It is, after all, the humanities, the sympathy and the knowledge which attract horse and man. We cannot know too much, or take too much trouble in trying to realise the mind, the thoughts and feelings of the best servant man ever had.

X

FLEXION

Then steady, my young one, my place I've selected
Above the dwarf willow, 'tis found I'll go bail.
With your muscular quarters beneath you collected,
Prepare for a rush like the "Limited Mail."

Dream of an Old Mellonian.

THERE was, at one time, a little correspondence in *Country Life* upon this interesting and important subject in equitation. How little it is understood can be readily seen, if I may be allowed to quote from letters in the correspondence columns of that paper where I referred to Baucher, who said :

"I lay it down as a principle that there does not exist any difference in sensibility in horses' mouths; that they all have the same sensitiveness—*when the head is properly placed* [the italics are mine], and offer the same resistance as the face leaves the vertical."

As I quite expected, a reply soon came from a correspondent, who had not quite understood what was meant, and who wrote :

"As to the matter of all horses being equally sensitive, I cannot bring myself to believe. At all events, were I riding a pulling *bull-necked* [my italics] lunatic . . . I would rather have a Mexican spade bit in his mouth than to suggest the medium of a snaffle."

I feel sure that when many readers saw these words they said : "Well, here, at least, is a man who can write sense." But Wisdom is not clothed in transparencies; she hides her virtue in garments of deeper texture.

The more obvious the retort, the more doubtful the line of argument, because so simple a point can hardly have been over-

looked by those who have spent a lifetime in the study of equitation.

As a matter of fact, although it is in apparent disagreement, we find on examination that it is not, in actuality, in opposition to Baucher's dictum.

Of course the "bull-necked" horse pulls. It is because he has a bull neck that he does so, and not because he has an insensitive mouth. In other words, the head is not properly placed. If we have trained our horses in this way they are merely carrying out the spirit of that training—pulling.

But that does not alter, in any way, what they could have been made into, had they been properly supplied.

I would like, therefore, to subscribe to Baucher's text by saying that a well-trained horse can never pull, provided he is ridden correctly, and that a pulling horse is a badly ridden or trained one. But no one, not even Baucher, could get on a "puller" and stop his evil practice at once. So that when we have to ride these unfortunate horses, who have been so falsely trained, we, too, may perforce have to use a strong bit at first.

However, these words of Baucher have another very important critic. Fillis says :

"It is possible that we can succeed in making all horses light in hand, but I deny that we can give them the same lightness and sensitiveness."

This is also a perfectly accurate statement with which Baucher himself would agree. We cannot acquire similar lightness, of course. But why? Not because of the mouth, but because of the horse's conformation. So here we have even great masters apparently disagreeing, but in reality there is not divergence of opinion at all.

The case briefly stated is this : Every horse is born with similar sensibility in the tongue and in the mouth, just the same as mankind is, with slight variation of course, because no two things in this world are exactly the same. Nevertheless, the sense of feeling is sufficiently similar for all practical purposes. For instance, none of us can drink boiling water, and in that respect we are all alike,

but, as it cools, some can drink it sooner than others, and in this respect we vary.

The difference, then, in the horse is not in the sensibility of the tongue, but in the conformation of the body. The horse that is badly put together will never be able to bridle as well as one who has a natural balance.

By training, hard work, and much skill we may be able to rectify to a considerable extent the faults the conformation enforces, and to balance a horse that is not well put together. The fault, therefore, is not to be found in the tongue, but in the flexion, and the experience of both Fillis and Baucher are at one.

This matter of flexion is of such great importance, if we wish to enjoy our rides and mean to control our horses, that it is a great pity it is not studied more by English riders. Flexion produces obedience and harmony. "Bull-necks" imply disunion and opposition. The horse, instead of giving to the pressure of the rein, sets his jaw or raises it as protest to the indications of the rider, and the pulling match begins.

The horse that flexes properly gives himself body and soul to the commands of his master, and a complete understanding between the two is established. But what is the common talk of the hunting field? Is it not something like this? "Oh, don't go messing your horse about; let him go along in his own way. Put a snaffle in his mouth, so as to give him greater freedom; ride straight and you will be all right. We are practical horsemen here in England, who can ride over a natural country better than anybody, and we think that the more you leave a horse alone the better."

How much I regret to-day having listened to this kind of talk when I was a youngster. I drank it all in, and it took many unpleasant rides, many falls, and a multitude of mishaps before I realized how terribly false such notions really are. There is nothing more pleasant than riding a well-schooled horse, who can be controlled by one finger, and nothing is more distasteful to those who are accustomed to it than to ride the ordinary half-schooled horse who resists every indication of the hand and rein.

So if we want to be comfortable let us take it as an axiom that correct flexion is essential, and let us now see how we can procure it. With green horses it is usually a fairly simple path to tread, but with those that have got into bad habits it is, naturally enough, a good deal more difficult. The principles are, however, similar.

The first stage is to gain the confidence of the horse. By gentle handling we must get him to feel assured that what we ask of him will be neither difficult nor painful. We must teach him to give himself to us. If we pull his head sideways, he must allow it to come (lateral flexion). If we pull his nose inwards, he must give to the pressure of the rein.

The first lesson to obtain flexion is to put the horse upon a circle, in such a way that the hind-legs follow the fore-legs on one track, and so that the horse's head is bent inwards, and the ribs also yield to the movement. This exercise should be done on both reins and at the walk, trot, and canter. Easy as it appears, this simple exercise is difficult to execute correctly. Do not expect too much at first. Be satisfied with small beginnings, and do not trot until you can get your horse to walk properly.

In the lateral flexions care should be taken to see that the head is kept erect. Do not allow the head to fall to the line of the withers, but always try to obtain the flexion from the poll, and not from the lower part of the neck. It is the same principle as that on which we drill a recruit. Not only should his chin be drawn in, but the head must be erect. So with the horse, keep the head high and obtain the flexion from that position.

When riding the horse we must keep him up to his bit by diligent use of the legs, and obtain the flexion by driving him forward with that pressure, and restraining him by a delicate application of the rein. Strong legs and delicate wrists and firm fingers are the keys to success, and *festina lente* the motto for method and guidance.

But we should remember that all training requires an active working of the mind. Sleepy riders produce sleepy horses. We

must keep our minds concentrated upon what we are doing if we are ever to hope for success. Let us remember the words of Philpotts Williams :

Be gentle, my children, in using your hands,
Touch lightly, and let the chief effort be mental ;
The will is the power that guides and commands.

XI

BITTING

“And wider still the sunlight ran
Between the saddle and the man.”

WE often hear the expression “There is a key to every horse’s mouth,” and, like many other such statements, it sounds wise. As a sophistry it is repeated, repetition develops, and age mellows it into an accepted truth which it is heresy to dispute. I fear, however, that adages are of little value when hounds are running, our horse is pulling and there is a yawning ditch ahead. Experience alone must be our guide. Now, what is our experience in this particular matter? We have all had horses which “take hold” a little. We have all had horses which carry their heads a little too low or a little too high. We have all had horses which tire us because they are too keen, and others which produce a similar result because they are too slow. We have had horses with light mouths or hard mouths; those that bridle and those that do not. Is it any reader’s experience to find that any of these advantages, or disadvantages, can be permanently rectified by changing the bit?

I am convinced that the answer will be largely negative. The keen horse can be steadied by work or feeding, but not by severity. The more we pull at the horse the more he seems to pull at us, and the contest can continue until sometimes the jaw is actually broken. So this method is obviously a false one. We cannot solve the problem by force alone. There is nothing new in this fact; it is one which is accepted by all experienced riders, and artifice is, therefore, adopted. High ports, low ports, sliding bars, twisted snaffles, chain snaffles, Hanoverian pelhams, Liverpool bits, gags and a hundred other devices are in use, and their respective

merits are daily discussed in riding circles. But of what avail is it all? Sometimes we think we can hold a horse better in this or that, and for a day or two it seems to work. But after a time we have to admit the problem has not been solved, and instead of fixing the blame on ourselves, we fly to some other ironmongery device of a greater or lesser degree of discomfort to the horse.

Let me quote Baucher's "Principles of Horsemanship" in detail, as the matter is of great importance :

"I still ask myself how one has been so long able to attribute merely to the difference in conformation of the bars the lightness or heaviness in hand which is found in horses?

"How has one been able to think that, according to the thickness of the flesh between the bit and the bone of the lower jaw, the horse yields to the slightest indication of the hand, or runs away, notwithstanding the most vigorous efforts of a strong pair of arms?

"It is, nevertheless, by relying on this inconceivable error that there have been forged bits of the most ridiculous and varied shapes, real instruments of torture, the effect of which could not but increase the trouble which it was sought to remedy.

"If anyone had taken the trouble to examine the cause of the resistance, he would soon have recognized that this, like all the others, does not arise from the difference in conformation of a feeble organ like the bars, but from the contraction communicated to the different parts of the horse, and especially to the neck, by some grave defect in conformation.

"It is therefore futile to hang on to the reins and to place in the horse's mouth an instrument more or less cruel.

"The mouth will remain insensible to our efforts so long as we have not given it the suppleness which will alone enable it to yield.

"There are horses which are heavy in hand, but this heaviness only arises from the length or weakness of the loins, from a narrow croup, short quarters, small thighs, and straight hocks, or, finally, a croup being higher than the withers. These are the real causes of resistance; the contraction of the neck, the fixity of the jaws

are merely the effects. The bars have nothing to do with the difficulties.

“By suppling the lower jaw the hardness disappears completely.

“Experiences a hundred times repeated give me the right to advance this principle, which at first may seem too absolute, but which is none the less true.

“I recognize only one kind of bit, and I here give the shape and dimensions, which I recommend as making it as simple as it is mild :

“Cheeks, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the eye to the end of the cheeks; circumference of the canons, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches; liberty for the tongue, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the bottom, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch at the top.*

“I affirm that this bit will secure the most absolute obedience from any horse that has been properly prepared by suppling exercises; and I need not add that, since I deny the utility of severe bits, I reject all means outside the resources of the rider himself.”

The above quotation from one of the greatest exponents of equitation cannot be read too often. In these few words is the whole essence of horse-breaking.

The bit is not intended to stop a horse, but to inform the horse that we want him to stop.†

The bit is in the mouth to give the horse the necessary flexion, and if our horse does not go with us, then it is because we have not obtained that flexion, and not because the bit does not suit him.

Baucher further states : “The horse will have completely yielded to the bit when his head has been brought into a position perpendicular with the ground.”

When we have a horse's head in this position, with his tongue

* These measurements, either by accident or design, are similar to those of a normal “Ward Union.”

† To quote the Duke of Newcastle once more : “The famous Pignatal at Naples never used but simple bits which made the ignorant wonder how he could dress horses so perfectly with so few kinds of bits. Likewise De Pluvinal said the same.”

playing with the bit, then the horse is ours. Pulling is quite impossible; he is our obedient servant, ready and willing to obey our slightest wish.

Consequently, what I do most earnestly ask all riders is—not to worry about the particular bit they are to put into their horse's mouth, but to consider in what way they can get that flexion which alone is essential to control, to good riding, and to the real enjoyment of equitation.

Away, then, with our Hanoverian pelhams, our Liverpool bits, and all other extremes! Let us stick to the simple double bridle, and we shall find we shall achieve by comfort and knowledge what we have never been able to effect by severity.

So-called "pulling" is often a matter of difficulty. Many people will say: "Well, my horse is fearfully keen, and pulls like a fiend. I can hold him in a strong bit, but he gets away with me in a less severe one. What is to be done?"

To this there is but one answer—the school. The horse has been allowed to fight against the bit instead of yielding to it, and he must be replaced and retaught.

The severity of the bit will not improve matters, but it may break his jaw. It will not make our riding either happier or safer, because we are working on wrong lines.

If we have no opportunity for schooling work, then we had better dispose of the horse before things become too uncomfortable.

We may make matters easier by more work and less corn, but these are merely temporary expedients and not remedies.

It often happens that a horse pulls us because he wants freedom. When this is the case, then we shall find it best to let him have the freedom he demands, and when we want him to stop let us say so in no uncertain manner. It so often happens that a horse does not pull up because he has never been clearly told by the rider to do so. A dull pull on the mouth conveys nothing to the horse except a sensation of discomfort.

It is often said that a tight curb-chain is a source of pain; but how can this be? The chain should be flat on the horse's jaw,

and as long as this is so, what can it matter whether the curb-chain is loose or tight, as far as severity is concerned?

Contrary to the usual acceptance, the curb-chain is better slightly tight than loose, for the following reason: Up to 45 degrees the pressure of the reins on the bit works directly on the curb. As the bit is pulled over the half right angle, then the pressure comes on the poll. As we all know, pressure at that spot tends to raise the horse's head instead of lowering it. Consequently, when fixing the chain, we should see that it begins to operate before the bit reaches an angle of 45 degrees.*

In choosing the bit most suitable to a horse, Swire, in his "Anglo-French Horsemanship," says: "Examine the mouth with the fingers, and find out by pressure whether or not the bars or the tongue are unduly sensitive, and let the result of the examination regulate the height and width of the port."

A bad habit which some horses contract is that of putting their tongues over the bit, and every kind of device has been tried to prevent it, but it is only a few people who realize the real root of the matter.

We can never eradicate a habit by force; we must go deeper. We must search for original causes.

Now, the horse is by nature a placid animal. He puts his tongue over the bit as a general rule because he is excited or worried. Consequently the best remedy for this habit is not iron-mongery, but thought.

Let us first try to get our horse serenely happy when we ride him.

Perhaps we have been riding him too fast or hurting his mouth. Perhaps we have been spurring him or bewildering him with our aids. Whatever it is, we should reconstruct our system and do nothing until we obtain the tranquillity which alone produces the results we require.

* To ensure that the curb chain is neither too tight nor too loose and fits flat on the jaw, it is a good tip to take off the superfluous rings. In practically all cases six links each side of the centre one is correct.

But supposing he still persists in this trick; then we can only work quietly on until we have obtained the necessary flexion.

When we have got that we will find that the habit is not so very bad, and that we can still ride the horse with reasonable comfort and pleasure.

But if we have no flexion, and the habit exists, then it may be that we shall find it a source of continued trouble.

Personally I think only of tranquillity and flexion, and leave the rest in the lap of the gods.

The practice of hunting in snaffles is hardly to be recommended, and it is very mysterious why so many people do, as it is much more tiring and unsatisfactory. Some horses are described as "snaffle-mouthed." But have we any idea what this means? Have we ever come across a horse that does not bridle more readily or one that could not be ridden in a double bridle? The snaffle is useful for grooms at exercise or for jockeys when at work, but those would seem to be the only occasions when it should be used, except, of course, with novices and children.

There are three kinds of martingales in common use—the running, standing and Irish—and they have certain objects in common. These are to give greater control, by keeping a horse's head down, and to prevent the rider getting a bang on the nose. The running martingale is sometimes placed on the snaffle rein, sometimes on the curb. Everyone seems to have different ideas as to which is right. So it may not be without interest if we examine this subject. Let us make this postulate, first of all, because it gives us a common factor to work upon and a text to refer to: "The martingale has as its object restraint for the abnormal and freedom for the normal." So when a horse's head is in its natural position it should not be operating, but when he throws his head about, its restraining influence should be immediately felt. That being so, I do not think there can be any question as to which is the right rein on which to place the running martingale. Normally we use the snaffle rein more than the curb, and therefore that rein should be free to play upon the horse's mouth, and delicacy of

touch should not be hampered by the continuous drag of the martingale rings. Secondly, as its object is to restrain the abnormal, it is just as well that when the horse does throw his head up he should have as strong a check as possible. This is undoubtedly more effectively accomplished when the martingale is on the bit.

But does this form of martingale really perform its functions? It does not prevent the horse from raising his head as high as he likes and from banging us on the nose when we are off our guard. It certainly keeps one rein in its place, but it does not prevent the other from flying over his head on occasions. It does not help us to keep our own hands down, because when it is properly fitted the rings should be as high as the top of the withers. In gateways it occasionally gets caught up, and, when falling, a horse sometimes puts his foot through it and breaks it to bits. Are not, therefore, its advantages rather more apparent than real?

The Irish martingale keeps the reins in place, but otherwise gives complete freedom. It is light and does not interfere in any way with the play of the reins, and, out hunting, does not get in the way when opening gates or when falling, and it is, therefore, better for this purpose than the running one. But it does not prevent a horse from throwing his head as high as he likes, and for this reason for all-round work the standing martingale is surely preferable to all others. It is not in such general use as it should be, because many people suppose it "restrains the normal" when a horse is jumping, and might even cause him to fall. Those of us who have ridden over every kind of fence in standing martingales know that such is not the case, but it is as well to examine this contention. A horse, when jumping naturally, with a free head, keeps it almost still. At the moment of throw off, the nose is advanced in proportion to the effort, and it is for this reason, and for this reason alone, that we should always have our martingales fairly long. But after the hind legs have left the ground, the horse begins to look where he is going. As he lands his head is down, and if he falls his head is also down. So that the standing martingale does not affect the horse on landing in any way.

It is a curious thing, but although we sometimes break running martingales in a fall, it is rare indeed to break a standing one. Once we have assured ourselves on these points, the advantages of it are apparent, because it does perform its functions. It does prevent a horse throwing his head too high; it does not prevent us having our reins quite free to play upon his mouth; and it seldom catches in a gateway or gets tied up when the horse is down. It gives complete freedom for the normal and is less cumbersome than the running martingale, which has, indeed, but little to recommend it. Another very great advantage a martingale has is the neck strap. It is most useful to take hold of in jumping or schooling a young or green horse, or for helping inexperienced riders, and its adoption can be strongly advocated.

Horses with One Side to their Mouths.—This is, of course, due to bad riding, and is produced not so much by bad handling as bad “legging.” The one-side mouth usually proclaims a one-legged rider. It is a difficult fault to overcome when of long standing, but the best rule is not to fight with the hand, but, whenever the horse refuses to yield to the bridle, to produce the necessary flexion by using the leg on that side as strongly as it is possible to do.

NOTE.—“The standing martingale . . . is the only one I would recommend.”—FILLIS.

XII

LEGS

When age hath weakened manhood's powers,
And every nerve unbraced,
Those scenes of joy will still be ours
On memory's tablets placed.

IT is a very odd thing that if we ask even experienced riders they will lead us to suppose that though there may be hope for people with flat thighs to become horsemen, there is none at all for those who happen to have round thighs ; their case is beyond cure.

This idea is so prevalent we come across it over and over again. Even in the latest instructions in a well-known training manual we find the following mystifying statement : “ A man with a short thick thigh requires his stirrups shorter [or longer, I forget which] in proportion than does a man of equal height with a flat thigh and thin leg,” and with that it hastily, and wisely, passes on to another subject.

A statement such as this may do well enough for those who have a not too enquiring mind, but it will not stand an even cursory examination, for we only have to ask what is meant by a round thigh to find upon what slender foundations these beliefs have been framed. The usual reply is for the instructor to bend one knee, put his weight upon that leg and slap what is then the inside portion of his thigh with proud satisfaction at its flatness.

The curious point of all this is that even supposing the shape of people's muscles varied to such a great extent in this part of their anatomy, it has nothing whatever to do with the seat in the saddle. Let us just think for one moment. This so-called flat portion is on *top* when we sit in the saddle, and does not affect our connection

with it. The only portions of our legs that are in contact with the saddle are what are called the buttocks. These are the *back* part of the thighs and are always round.

The origin of this quaint notion arises from the somewhat less attractive appearance a man with short strong thighs has compared with one with long thighs, however weak they may be. His stout legs have the appearance of roundness, and should he fall off on any occasion it is common to hear it said, "What can you expect? He has such round thighs."

And yet the owner of short thighs, provided they are strong ones, has a firmer seat than the tall man with long thin legs, a fact I have often observed. Of course, the shape or strength of the thigh has nothing whatever to do with the length of the stirrup leather, as I hope those who have read the chapter on the length of the stirrup will realise.

I am inclined to think that short thighs are even better for riding than long ones, for the following reason: If we are picking up something with a pair of tongs, the nearer we get to the joint the greater power we have, and I submit for consideration whether, other things being equal, the shorter thighs would not produce greater pressure of the knees on to the saddle.

In my own experience I have always noticed that the tall, long-legged rider has nothing like so strong a seat as the short, thick-set man.

It would be an interesting and easy experiment, if a spring with a registering dial were made, so that a man could test the strength of his grip by holding it between his knees. The short-legged man would, I am confident, prove superior in strength to the long-legged one.

There is one more point. It is often said that owing to the extreme muscular development of many "round"-thighed men they find it hard, if not impossible, to get their knees on to the saddle flaps, and so experience difficulties more loosely knit men do not. The reply to this is that none of us, whatever make or shape he may have, does get the inside of his knees close to the flaps of the

saddle at the walk or standstill without effort. Generally speaking, they are not even in close contact, and sometimes actually daylight is shown. But this is of no consequence. In fact, it is right that it should be so, because in these circumstances we all should be as free and unconstrained as possible, but directly we put our weight on to our stirrup irons and take it away from the saddle (as when rising at the trot, for example), it does not matter how we are shaped, fat or thin, long or short, we shall find there is no difficulty in getting our knees to hold firmly to the saddle. In fact, we must ; we have no option. This is not a matter, therefore, for concern by either pupil or instructor, whose assiduities can be better directed to the solution of more important problems.

The next question is that of the angle of the foot. In the cavalry the men used to be taught to keep their toes in, and this fact has often misled people who have not understood the reason. It is nothing to do with equitation *per se*, but is due to the fact that when riding in the ranks, unless the feet are so placed, there is the likelihood of their catching in the stirrup of the man next and so causing discomfort, if nothing worse. But for civilian riding the angle of the foot is one for nature alone to decide.

If a man has knock-knees, his feet will be inclined to turn outwards. If he has bow-legs, they will have a tendency to turn inwards. No instructor of equitation, however efficient, can alter the shape of his pupil's legs. Our legs may be "pulled," perhaps, but re-formed—never! The angle of the foot, therefore, in a horizontal plane is not a matter to worry about, but vertically it is of great importance. The smallest tendency to turn the toe downwards must be checked at once.* For unless the heel is pressed down the muscles of the calf cannot come into play and true contact with the horse is lost. The action also by raising the knee takes the weight off the stirrup. So it is a double fault which must be carefully guarded against.

This brings us to the question of grip. It is not so long ago that horsemanship was supposed to be largely a question of

* This tendency of turning the toe down is very noticeable amongst jockeys.

strength. When we used to lean our bodies back over our fences, much more strength, certainly, was required, but its importance was overrated. In order to increase the muscular development of the fork, recruits have to ride bareback or on numnahs, or stripped saddles, and many, many moments of useless discomfort are suffered thereby. It is done for two supposed reasons. The first is, of course, for strengthening the grip, but the second is much more subtle. It is to get him "down in his saddle." The instructor does not realise that the pupil's failure to get "down in the saddle" is due to lack of confidence, which he actually increases by taking away the stirrups.

The fact is that the rider who looks uncomfortable in the saddle and who is not "down" in his seat is one whose muscles are not relaxed; one who is anxious and who is, in fact, gripping. Consequently, the way to get a good seat is not to grip, but the very converse; to be free and supple and confident and happy, and then no one will say you are not "sitting down."

We must have strength and plenty of it for emergencies, and for steadying and controlling a keen horse, but in the ordinary course of riding we need exercise nothing but the gentle pressure which can be maintained hour after hour. Those riders who find themselves exhausted under normal conditions are unnecessarily exercising their muscles to the inconvenience of both themselves and their horses. The steeplechase rider who comes in as blown as his horse (unless he has had a hard finish or a difficult ride) should be noted by punters and his mounts avoided.

We must remember our muscles are to help our balance, not to direct it. If we are properly placed we do not require to grip under normal circumstances, but we do want all our muscles on occasion (as in refusing, pulling, shying, etc.). I once remember hacking with a friend whose horse was very fidgety, and he complained how it tired him, because he had to grip so hard. I recommended him not to use the lower part of his leg, and the moment that was done the horse went quite quietly. Many horses fret with the pressure of the leg always on them, and this was an instance of that kind. My

BALANCE IS BETTER THAN GRIP.



friend was much surprised at the advice he had received, because he had been brought up on old ideas, and thought that to ride well was to grip well.

But as riding undoubtedly does require plenty of strength, it is curious that the fashion of the day is to display as little calf as possible. What is called a good leg for a boot is a spindle shank, which is a thoroughly bad one for riding. We do require calves in equitation, and it is surprising that so much pains should be taken to make them look almost unnaturally small. The better the development of the calf the better for riding, so let our stout-legged friends take heart. They can comfort themselves with the fact that if their lower extremities are not quite so elegant they are more efficacious. What is good for the "horsey" man is not necessarily good for the horseman.

It is on account of this prevalent idea of grip that pupils are so often taught riding by having their stirrups taken away. This, without doubt, does get them to use the riding muscles, but similar results can be obtained in a much easier way, by teaching the use of the leg in the half passage, shoulder in, reining back, and so on.

These exercises use the leg muscles as much as is necessary, without causing discomfort or loss of confidence.

It is very important to encourage the pupil, and make him enjoy his lessons, but this cannot be done by asking him to perform feats that even the instructor himself would find strenuous.

XIII

HEADS

Then squire, volleying oaths and vexed,
Fighting his hunter for refusing.

IN this country, where hunting and racing are the two most prominent connections between man and horse, the inclination is to allow custom to dominate our principles and our practices. We are too inclined to think only of those things which are our immediate concern, and to avoid everything that might be regarded as a side issue, or of indirect importance.

For this reason it may not be out of place to discuss the differ-

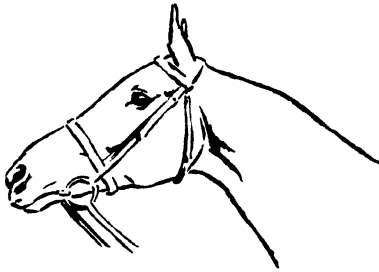


FIG. 22.

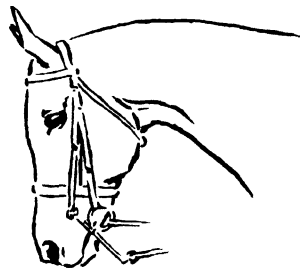


FIG. 23.

ences between the correct and incorrect positions of a horse's head in motion.

Although it is one to which many people have undoubtedly given a great deal of attention, nevertheless the principles are not so widely known as to make them of common knowledge, and if more attention were devoted to this important matter it would be much to our advantage.

The natural position of a horse at the standstill or in motion is with his nose protruded and his neck straight, as in Fig. 22. The natural position of a yokel on parade for the first time is also

with his head thrown forward and his chin out. Both require drilling.

The position of attention for a soldier is one from which he can obey the word of command instantly. He must be both balanced and alert. Now, the horse depicted in Fig. 22 is neither. He cannot instantly obey our commands. If we wish to turn him, we have to pull him round in a circle.

This is the attitude, however, of a great many of our hunters, and their lack of handiness is a good deal accentuated if they are ridden in a snaffle.

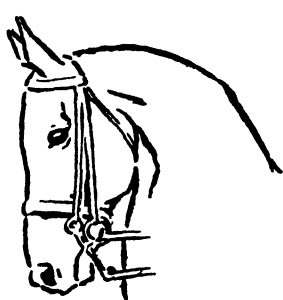


FIG. 24.

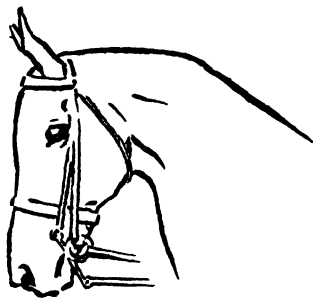


FIG. 25.*

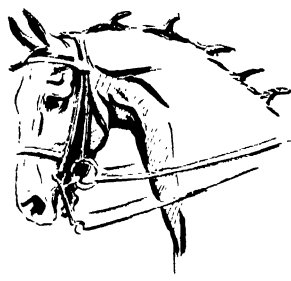


FIG. 26.

If we watch a cavalry regiment go by, however, we see that most of the horses are “bent.”

This is, of course, necessary on parade, because handiness and instant obedience are essential. It may not be so necessary in the hunting field, but it is undoubtedly helpful and pleasant if we have horses so trained. It is not easy, however, to train horses to this, on account of the circumstances in which hunters are schooled and purchased.

* Fig. 25 represents the position of a horse's head at the moment of greatest control, i.e. his nose vertical with the ground. This should, however, be only momentary. On the move, the nose line should vary between 45° and 90° with the ground. Fig. 26 shows this position, which must not, however, be taken too literally, because every horse has his own carriage suited to his conformation. But no single drawing can properly express that which should be in continual movement and suppleness. Suffice to say that in order to get a true carriage of the body, the horse must carry his head high enough for the base of the nose to be about as high as the top of the wither.

Manège work is required, and that is not always easy for those who are engaged in preparing them only for the sale ring.

Nevertheless, if we can get our hunters to bridle, it certainly will add to the enjoyment of riding them.

The horse that has been properly flexed is one that bends from the poll, and not from the neck. Fig. 23 gives an example of a horse with an incorrect flexion. It is a common fault, and is frequently mistaken for the true bend. Fig. 24 depicts a horse which has been over-bent and represents another incorrect flexion.

Figs. 25 and 26 are examples of the truly placed horse—*Bien mis*

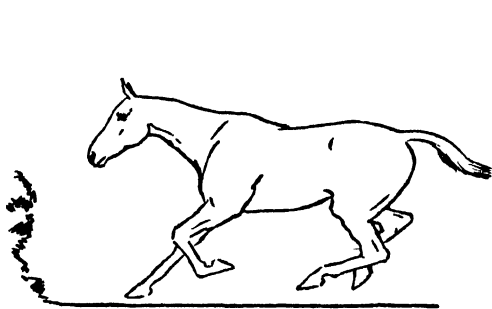


FIG. 27.

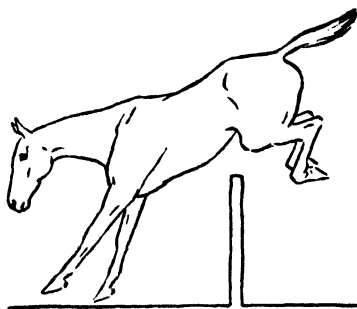


FIG. 28.

as the French put it. Here we have the flexion from the poll. The horse is playing with his bit, showing that he is yielding his lower jaw, and he is ready to obey any command.

These are the positions of obedience, but not of freedom. When we come to faster work, it is very necessary for us to study the natural position of the head.

Most professors of athletics say that the position of the head is the most important factor in balancing the body. In skating it is an old saying: "Throw the head and the feet will follow." As this is undoubtedly true, it is well for us to consider the right position for the horse's head under all conditions, so that we can know how we can help him and—what is more important still—how we may avoid hindering him.

The free horse, on approaching a fence, will lower his head to

see where he is going and where he will take off, as depicted in Fig. 27. This is an extremely important point.

If we want to get the best out of our horses, it is not enough to let them have a free head. It should be sufficiently free to enable them to lower it before the leap takes place. Unless this occurs the leap will lack freedom, and a scrape over or through will probably result.

Let us now take the land. On landing, naturally, the head will always be down, as depicted in Fig. 28. It is in the latter stages of the leap that the question of the martingale comes most into point, and it is well worth study and thought. Unless the

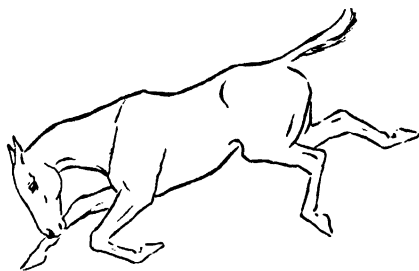


FIG. 29



FIG. 30

horse is interfered with by the rider, the head is never raised. Even when a peck takes place, as shown in Fig. 29, the head is still down. It never begins to rise until the horse starts to recover. The head is then lifted to about the level shown in Fig. 30, but no higher.

If, therefore, we have a standing martingale fitted, sufficiently long to admit of freedom for positions 28, 29, and 30, we then can be perfectly sure we shall never handicap our horse while he is performing any reasonable feat.

I think it is because these positions are insufficiently studied that we hear people so often saying they prefer the running to the standing martingale.

The standing martingale is practically never seen steeplechasing, and yet I submit that were it worn, adjusted to correct length, it

could not possibly interfere with a horse. On the other hand, with "star-gazing" horses, it would undoubtedly be of value.

When we see photographs, as, indeed, we often do, of horses jumping fences with their heads up, we know for a positive certainty that it is the fault of the rider or of training. Undoubtedly many men do interfere with their horses while jumping, without knowing it. It would be an excellent thing if every hunting man would ask a friend to watch this particular point when next he jumped, and tell him exactly how the horse carried his head over the fence.

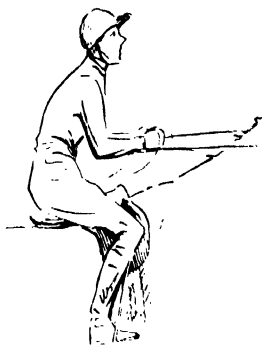


FIG. 31.

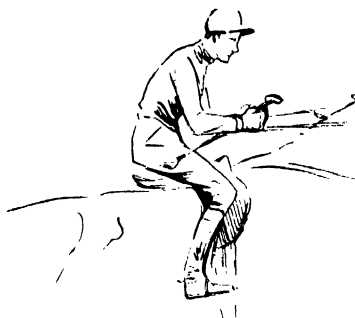


FIG. 32.

I fear the percentage of those who gave real freedom to their horses would be a rather small one.

Having now studied the question of the horse's head, it is also important to think about our own. Many riders are unable to go with their horses, and look ungainly for no other reason than that they do not throw their heads with their bodies as the horse takes off. This produces the attitude as depicted in Fig. 31. But if the rider throws his head with his body, as he should do, the angle should be as shown in Fig. 32, in which position he is truly balanced, just as he would be on the floor of a gymnasium.

By the study of these small points we can improve our horsemanship to a great extent, and they are well worth considering.

XIV

SHOULD LADIES RIDE ASTRIDE ?

Deprive him of horses and hounds as you will,
A fox-hunter once is a fox-hunter still,

“**M**OUNT and Man” was first published ten years ago, and I have decided to leave the title of this chapter, although out of date, unaltered, because it is an indication of the change which has come about in that period. I was a strong advocate of ladies riding astride. In these ten years they have so fully demonstrated the fact that they can ride cross-saddle that the question to-day has become superfluous; so much so that in this edition this chapter could very easily have been left out. But I have decided to leave it in, because the objections that were raised in those days have a considerable bearing upon the many false conceptions that exist on the subject of riding generally.

The critics in those days used to shout from the house-tops that ladies could not possibly ride astride because they have round thighs; they were not physically capable or fitted for this form of exercise.

Medical evidence was brought in to prove its danger, and whenever any lady fell off it was proof of her incapacity, while if a man fell off it was proof of his courage.

I wish to congratulate the determination and good sense of the ladies, who, in the face of so much opposition, have carried on to demonstrate the falseness of these views.

It is interesting to note that those people who have always preached the theory of round thighs must surely find themselves in a difficult position. It is not true that ladies have round thighs as far as the position in the saddle goes. But these critics have always maintained that they have, and with equal insistence they have declared that those who have round thighs can never ride.

The next point was that ladies have knock-knees and this fact

would be very detrimental. It is a point which, however absurd, has been proved false. The knock-kneed rider, whether man or woman, is not debarred from good horsemanship. The fact has nothing to do with horsemanship; it affects only the angle of the foot, which is after all a comparatively minor matter.

I think it will, however, be a long time before the side-saddle will completely disappear, because until people have a thorough experience of the cross-saddle, it has its uses. It is very much easier, and ladies find that a long day's hunting in the cross-saddle is often too tiring, especially in the Shires.

Also, many ladies simply cannot spare the necessary time to acquire a secure seat astride. They want to hunt as much as possible, and if they find that they can hunt four days a week side-saddle compared with two days astride, this will always be a strong inducement for the side-saddle. With regard to falls, they are certainly not so frequent, but, on the other hand, when they do occur they are often much more severe. These are the only points that can be found to recommend this form of riding, except the fact that many people are so accustomed to think that ladies look smart and elegant in what can only be described as a grotesque position.

But this again is entirely a question of custom, and to those who are used to seeing ladies riding astride the old style does seem ugly.

It is very amusing that those same men who will go night after night to the ballet to admire the ladies' legs should think that they look better wrapped up in a sort of blanket when on horseback. It does not seem a very great compliment to the conformation of the ladies they have met in the saddle.

There are two other points that I must mention before leaving this chapter, because I am so anxious that ladies should have the same enjoyment in the saddle that I have always had myself. The use of one's legs is the very essence of riding, and if I were forced to ride side-saddle I would lose most of my enthusiasm. After all, the leg is 70 per cent. of the art of riding, and to have to put both your legs on one side of a horse takes away all the pleasure, and not

SHOULD LADIES RIDE ASTRIDE?

only this, but it makes the horse one-sided. *He must not canter on* either leg, and all his movements become one-sided in consequence.

Those who consider their horses, and I know most ladies do, will find very little that can be said in favour of the side-saddle.

It has to be girthed extremely tight, and sore backs are more frequent than ladies will own. The habit is incommodious because you want help when mounting, and one cannot change horses readily when wanted. I therefore congratulate all ladies who do ride astride. I wish them the best of good luck, and I hope their sisters who still stick to riding side-saddle will become more and more converted every year.

XV

STABLE MANAGEMENT

The last red rose on the arch has faded,
The border has mourned for its last white flower
The dahlias drop where the frost has raided,
The grass is wet with the autumn shower.
Dull are the paths with their leaf-strewn gravel,
Cold is the wind as it wanders by ;
Still there's a path that a man can travel
Happy at heart, though the roses die.

THIS is a title I hesitate to use, because many people will not read a line further, and quite right too. There has been so much written on this subject that anything further might be regarded, with justification, as superfluous. I feel sure the hunting man will not read it, and yet, somehow, I hope he may, because I am not going to talk on the old dry-as-dust subjects. I am not going to explain the difference between seeds and meadow hay, or to write that the seat of curb is not in the jaw. I want to talk of the humanities of management rather than its rules. To dissect our habits, not to add to them. To analyse rather than synthesise.

We are too often slaves of habit. Repetition is mistaken for verity, and stable jargon for philosophy. "I have said it three times, and therefore it is true" is more accurate than we like to admit. It is, therefore, our object to look into some of these time-worn formulæ of stable management to see whether they are not over-mellowed for modern consumption and too stale for even custom to digest any longer.

"If a horse has colic, he must be walked about." Perhaps of all rules this is the most generally accepted. It is ingrained in the soul of every groom, and it is impressed with persistence on every student. I remember once, when I was orderly officer going the rounds at night, I found one of the night guards very busy in a stall. I asked him what he was doing. "Oh," he replied, "these

horses will keep lying down, and I have had such a time keeping them on their legs!" He had obviously had the "colic" rule well rubbed into him and had got it a bit mixed up.

Now, why have we got this rule? If we have pains in our centre-pieces, we do not want to walk about, we go and lie down. So why should not a horse do the same? The reply that is usually given to this enquiry is either that a horse may twist himself internally if he lies down, or that he might get cast in the box or stall and hurt himself. If these are the only reasons, and I have never heard any others, they are rather weak for so painful a precaution. The chances of a horse twisting himself when lying down are no greater than if he is standing up, and those of injury from getting cast, when under supervision, are slight. It does, however, exist, and so, to be absolutely safe, the best plan is to lead the horse to the paddock or straw yard and let him lie down there as much as he likes. We are never wrong if, when in doubt, we treat horses as we would treat ourselves.

Another point to remember is that nearly all sprains occur when a horse is tired. No sound horse has ever broken himself down at the first fence of a steeplechase. It is the last one that is the dangerous one, when he is fatigued or blown. The ligaments go when flexion becomes difficult, and it is then we must look out for trouble. Consequently, hunting people who want to keep their horses sound (and who do not?) should bear this simple rule in mind: "Never ride a tired horse, and you will seldom sprain a sinew." If this rule were observed in the hunting field, I fear it would spell ruin to our good friends the veterinary surgeons, whose activities would be more than halved. Fortunately for them, so many people will stop out till the last (especially if they are on hirelings, of course) and bring their horses back in a really tired, if not exhausted, condition. This is bad policy from whatever standpoint we look at it. The tired horse will not come again so soon, and we actually will get much less riding out of a horse so treated than out of one which, with short hours, will take his turn regularly. What we should try to remember is that six hours under the saddle is

sufficient for any horse, however steady the day's hunting has been. If he has left his stable at 10 a.m., we should try to see he is back in his stable at 4 p.m. If we do that, we shall find we shall get two days a week regularly from him. But each hour over that should put him back a whole day. Every hour, therefore, you ride a horse after he has had enough is a sheer loss in whatever way we look at it. However, horses are expected to come home exhausted, if we can judge from the preparations that are made by our grooms for their arrival. It is the invariable custom to have gruel prepared and ready for them, to be followed by a linseed mash. All this is very necessary if the animal is really exhausted; but if he is not, is he still to be treated as an invalid?

Let us think of it in this way. Supposing we have just returned home after an exhausting day, we find our appetite has left us. All we want is, perhaps, a cup of tea and bed. But if we have got back after only some reasonable and invigorating exercise, what we want is a jolly good dinner. We should be very annoyed if we were presented with a little bread and milk, a mild purgative and sent straight upstairs! But we are no different in this respect from the horse. When he comes back after a reasonable day's hunting cool and contented, he is jolly hungry, and wants a bucket of good cold water and an extra feed of corn.

We want to run our stables by reason and not rule, and once we start to think we shall find many little things like this that demand our attention.

Another point it would be well for us to remember is that the horse is gregarious by nature and dislikes solitude. And yet how many loose-boxes are merely horse prisons! The horse, too, tied to a blank wall in a stall has no opportunity of seeing the world or understanding what is going on around him, but still we are surprised when horses shy! It is often said that wind sucking is a habit started by sheer boredom. If only we would build our stables so that horses can look out all day long at the things going on in the stable yard, and can see (and perhaps communicate with) each other, we shall seldom have timid horses to ride; they will

“do” better and be more credit to us in many ways than if we treat them like discarded wheelbarrows, only to be put into a shed until they are wanted again. Leave the top half of the stable doors open and you will find that every horse, except at meal-time, will have his head sticking out when the weather is suitable. Nevertheless, how often we see the stud groom come along and close them all up lest the horses’ coats might stare a bit with the cold. He likes to keep the stables overwarm, so that when we come round and he turns back the rugs for us to look at his horses we will speak in praise of glossy coats and splendid grooming. It is all so transparent to those who wish to look into things, and it is such a pity the owners themselves so often are misled by the guile or ignorance of their grooms.

The next point I want to mention is hardly stable management, but it is difficult to find a better heading under which to include lines too brief for a chapter to themselves.

It is of great help to all out hunting if they will only see that their stirrup leathers are twisted before mounting. This allows the iron to hang at right angles to the horse’s sides, ready for the foot to go in, and obviates the difficulty that is otherwise experienced when the stirrup is lost (as it is by all of us sometimes) in replacing it on the foot. It sometimes saves a fall, and it is always a useful assistance in times of emergency. It has another advantage : When mounting, it prevents having to touch the horse’s ribs with the toe when trying to get the right toe into the iron. Unless we can obviate this, it is unreasonable to expect a horse to stand still when being mounted.

The rule is this : When the stirrup iron is hanging naturally, take hold of the leather with one hand just above the iron, and give the iron a sharp twist backwards and outwards with the other.

But, curiously enough, this simple plan is most difficult to enforce. Grooms simply will not do it, and, as often as not, when they do do it, do it with the twist the wrong way. However, with perseverance, the practice can be instilled, and it is really well worth the trouble.

Bandaging Tails.—Perhaps one of the most common practices in stables is that of bandaging tails, in order to keep them tidy.

This is a practice which is only eyewash. It looks as if the groom is taking a lot of trouble, and many people suppose it is actually useful.

But there are three very valid reasons why it should not be done :

If the bandage is too loose, as the horse swings his tail the hairs get rucked up and the bandage is worse than useless.

If the bandage is too tight it stops the circulation, and the hairs fall out.

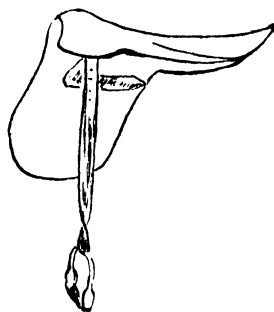


FIG. 33.—THE TWISTED LEATHER.

If the bandage is put on properly, which is a difficult thing to do, it doesn't do any good.

What is wanted is a clean, well-brushed tail only. That is worth more than all the bandaging possible, but as it is a little more trouble it is not quite so attractive a solution as many grooms would like.

Bandages Generally.—Similarly, bandaging is much too frequently practised in stables. A loose bandage is no good, a tight one is liable to do more harm than anything else, a wet one soon becomes dry, a cold one soon gets warm, and a warm one cold.

The best remedy for all weakness is hot fomentation and hand rubbing.

Another point is about water. It is generally believed that this is the cause of colic. But why? If we give a horse a bucket of water and then gallop him, the result is naturally distressing to the horse, and may produce colic. But if we do not ask anything of him after he has been watered, the best rule is to let him drink as much and as often as he likes. Colic is not brought about through this, and "breaking out" is more a matter of nerves than anything else.

In many stables horses are not allowed to water when they come in from work; some grooms give the reason that it prevents horses from breaking out with sweat, others, that it prevents colic. But if we treat horses as we would ourselves, we shall never be far wrong. When we come in from a strenuous game, most of us like a drink. I know my horses do, and personally I always see they get it. Good food and good water under natural conditions will not hurt any horse.

Firing.—As I am opposed to blistering, still more am I opposed to firing, which seems to me a relic of the Dark Ages. It appears to me to be both insensate and cruel. The rule seems to be that when you have a small sprain you blister, but when you have a severe sprain you fire. While the rule should be that after a severe sprain you want only a long rest—just as we do ourselves.

My final point, in which I appeal to the common sense of my readers, is with regard to the use of bandages. In almost every stable we see horses continually bandaged. Sometimes they are steeped in cold water, sometimes in hot. Sweating bandages are occasionally applied, and an immense amount of unnecessary trouble is involved for no purpose.

An over-tired leg will not become less tired for all the water in the world. The correct treatment is rest and massage.

Even when horses' legs are perfectly clean we see them bandaged all day and all night. There is only one rule that seems to be reasonable. Have bandages in your stable ready to apply to abrasions and for journeys and other occasions when protection is necessary, and at all other times leave the horses' legs alone.

Blistering.—The practice of blistering is too prevalent, and the reasons for this are not clear.

Horses get filled legs, generally speaking, because they have had too much work (but occasionally from too little). Can either of these be reasons for blistering? Sometimes a leg will fill on account of a small sprain, but this is no reason either. We don't blister ourselves after a slight sprain and there seems no reason why we should blister horses.

When we do blister a horse, and a painful operation it is, we have to lay him by for six weeks. At the end of this period the leg is usually quite clean and cool—but the success is not due to the blistering but to the rest.

In fact this is the only merit of the blister, that it enforces rest for a horse that otherwise might be worked too soon.

Blankets.—In most stables horses are over-blanketed. It is impossible to get rugs that do not press down upon the withers, and more than 90 per cent. of horses show the signs of blanket marks upon their withers. Grooms do not seem to be able to use judgment, and they have horses rugged up on hot days because they are not in the habit of taking them off. Within reason, the best rule is to have your horses under rather than over rugged. It is a good rule to have a thermometer in your stable and give the groom special orders to have no rugs at all when the temperature rises above 55 degrees, and not to put two rugs on before the temperature touches 45 degrees.

This rule adds very considerably to the comfort of the horse, as it would do to yourself. You would hardly like to wear a thick coat weighing down on your shoulders whenever you are indoors.

XVI

MASTERY

My song is of the horseman—the centaur of all time,
Who stole for us the freedom of colts of every clime,
Who won the spurs of mastery, who held the reins of pride,
Who left the world a heritage of sons to rule and ride.

A LITTLE while ago a man was prosecuted for knocking a horse about in Richmond Park. He had been trying to get him to jump a bench and had failed. On being asked why he had treated his horse in this way, he replied that “he had to show he was master.” This answer displayed great want of understanding of horses and how to treat them, for mastery is not a matter of either strength or punishment, but of knowledge, patience, tact and perseverance.* These are the attributes of the horse-master. He brings out all the tractable qualities by gentle but persistent methods, and leaves violent measures to those whose inexperience has yet to discover their folly. There is no difficulty in getting a horse to jump a bench in a park, or any other obstacle, with or without wings, provided we do it the right way. But almost every horse, no matter how highly trained, would refuse such an obstacle if he was put at it in the wrong way.

Because we cannot get a horse to jump, even though we put him at it again and again, it does not mean that he is our master; it means that we are not dealing with the matter properly. If we find him refusing, it is *not* derogatory to give up the task; we do not lower ourselves in the horse's estimation by going away, and we do not perpetuate the habit by so doing. These are mistaken ideas which have done a great deal of harm to horse-training. The statement we hear so often, that we must always prove ourselves master, is much misunderstood and misused. Master we can easily be. No

* “The essence of dealing with a horse is tact.”—SWIRE.

animal is more ready to admit it than the horse ; but we must, as in other matters, tackle it scientifically.

We must understand his psychology, and turn those mysteries of mind to work with, instead of against, our wishes.

The first characteristic is observation—suspicion of novelty.

The second is timidity—the “ shying ” quality.

The third, the law of self-preservation—fear of falling, or of getting bogged or ditched.

The fourth, obedience to habit, or the acceptance of the normal.

The fifth, repugnance to pain or discomfort.

The sixth, the homing instinct, or the desire for stable and food.

These are the qualities which have to be considered if we wish to be horse-masters ; and by so doing we shall find much less difficulty in our training.

I have before me, as I write, the picture of a horse being jumped over a chair, without wings, in an open field. Both he and his rider are perfectly happy, and enjoying themselves hugely. This is horse-mastery ; but how is it attained ? Not by whip and spur, but by patience and perseverance.

Let us reconsider our Richmond Park rider and see what he was doing. First, the obstacle was probably somewhat strange. The horse had a natural aversion to the unknown, and the shying quality was brought out. Secondly, as it had no wings, the law of self-preservation suggested an easier way. Thirdly, the horse had, possibly, not been jumping for some time—at any rate, certainly not over that place—and the law of habit worked against the task. It is not suggested that the horse had sore shins, or corns ; but, if he had, that, too, would affect his decision against making the leap. But it is also possible that the rider was jumping away from home, in which case the homing instinct would be affected. Finally, it is quite likely that the horse had not, in the first instance, understood that he had been wanted to jump over so unexpected an obstacle in so unusual a place. Once more to quote J. Fillis : “ Il faut jouer de toutes les ruses par la patience et le raisonnement.”

PLATE XIX.



IF A HORSE REFUSES WITH YOU, BLAME YOURSELF FIRST.

Hence the refusal. The rider, never having studied how to treat a horse, described these refusals as direct disobedience, for which punishment had to be inflicted. And by this punishment he is doing the very thing that does produce habitual refusal. What he should have done was to have given up trying on that occasion, and awaited a better opportunity later on.

An immense amount of harm has been caused by this false idea of mastery. "I won't be beaten, so the horse must be," is a spectacle to be seen very frequently, as the inexperienced rider shoves his half-trained horse at some small obstacle in the hunting field. He does not realise that it is not the size of the fence that is troubling the horse, but the bewilderment of ideas which are passing through the animal's brain.

Horses that have been well ridden do not dislike jumping, and the little joyful buck they sometimes give after landing is suggestive of enjoyment and *joie de vivre*, while no properly trained horse will persistently refuse. But leave off jumping for a few months, and we shall find him quite likely to refuse for a little, until he has got back to the old habits. But the horse-master does not hit him for that reason. He just calls him a "silly old ass," and puts him at something easier. In five minutes that horse is hopping over the fences as well as ever, and both horse and rider are the best of friends.

This is mastery. Tact does as much in the training of horses as in even the management of men. Fatigue is not a cause of refusal. No one has ever seen a refusal at the last fence of a steeplechase, but there have been many at the first one. A horse does not refuse because he is tired, but because he is too fresh. That might have been another reason for our park friend's incident. His horse may even have been quite accustomed to jumping benches in the park, but "Monday morning" refusals are very common. A good gallop would soon have put that little matter right, and he would then have proclaimed his "mastery" in a very different way.

We must remember a horse can beat us in strength and in obstinacy, and woe to the rider who attempts to proclaim his superiority in either of those qualities. We have no "mastery"

there. We are as inferior in those matters as we are superior in other branches of knowledge. So, to be masters of our horses, we must be masters of ourselves.

Patience and moderation, good humour and self-control are the attributes of horse-mastery, and if we do not possess or get possessed of those virtues, we must give up hope of attaining any success.

The rule is, after all is said and done, a very simple one : “ Whenever difficulty is experienced, simplify the task,” or, in the appropriate phraseology of the French, “ Reculer pour mieux sauter,” and “ Commander au cheval avec justice justesse et nuance.”

NOTE.—The Duke of Newcastle said :

“ It is your business to make both your person and your manège as agreeable to him as possible, by working him a little at a time, and by being bountiful in your caresses and recompenses, and very sparing in your corrections.”

XVII

VICE

Easy the lessons of the youthful train,
When instinct prompts and when example guides.

PETER BECKFORD : *Thoughts on Hunting*, 1781.

WHEN we talk of vice in horses, to what do we refer? What are our experiences which lead us to use so strong a term? Can we honestly say that we have any justification for this expression? Possibly those who have lived abroad and know the habits of the country-bred may be able to produce instances, but, speaking generally, I think all will admit, when they think the matter over, that they have never come across real vice in any horse. By real vice I mean inherent vice—vice which has been born in the foal and which cannot be cured or eradicated by gentle treatment.

Most of the so-called vicious incidents that have come to my knowledge have been produced by incorrect handling. One horse will start kicking if the rider is inadvertently tickling him with the spur; another will begin to jib because the rider is too nervous, or to refuse because he is being badly ridden; another will show temper in the stable on account of bad grooming; and so on. We have all experience of “temper,” but if we try to understand the reasons for this we shall nearly always find it is due, not to the horse, but to his treatment.

Let me quote Baucher :

“I lay it down as a principle that all the resistances of young horses arise in the first place from a physical cause, and that this cause only becomes moral through want of skill or the ignorance or brutality of the rider.”

Fortunately here in this country horses have a better chance than they do in the American Continent. With us horses are bred to gentle treatment from their youth up, and therefore buck-jumping is practically unknown. But on the ranches where the horse is bred under wild conditions, and has to be tamed by methods of force, buck-jumping is the only means of defence the horse has. It

is not inherent vice, but it is due solely to the conditions under which they are handled. I am prepared to wager a large sum that were we to transpose our methods of handling young horses, we should have the home of buck-jumping in this country and it would die out completely overseas.

There is another very common "vice." It is called "running away." All horsemen know that this is usually due to bad horsemanship. In fact, wherever the habit has been formed it is always due to a continuance of bad riding. The horse does not *want* to gallop, as hard as possible, along the macadam road, or to go "all out" round and round a field. He does so because, first of all, he is an animal of good courage and vitality; secondly, because he has no knowledge of what is required of him. All he is aware of is a very heavy hand tugging at his mouth. He receives no "aids" or anything to tell him of the rider's wishes, and the pain he is suffering affects his powers of reasoning and of thought. If he were "vicious" he would soon "remove" his rider, but being, as all horses are, docile by nature, and wonderfully patient and long-suffering, he bears the discomfort without ill-will, and just gallops on, because he really does not know what else to do. With speed the blood surges to his head, his reasoning powers leave him, and, bewildered beyond his mental capacity, he may charge into some obstacle which causes a serious accident. But the poor animal has shown no "vice" and the blame should rest entirely upon the rider or the training he has had.

Horses that have been steeplechased naturally learn to "pull," because that is the way they have been taught. So if we take them out hunting and find them hard to stop, it is no vice. It is very much the reverse, in fact. They are doing what they think is expected of them. It is up to us as riders to re-train them, and not to blame them.

In the old days, if one wanted to pick out a good troop horse, it was always a good dodge to ask the troop sergeant to show you the worst horse in the stable. I have no doubt things are much better now, but in those days a horse with courage soon became the "nasty

vicious brute," and thin-skinned horses were always "devils to groom."

Whatever happened, they always blamed the horse. When casting parades came on there were always quite a bunch of horses up to be cast for "vice," and very many stories could be told of the wonderful successes that subsequent owners have had with these so-called "incurably vicious" horses.

In the old cavalry training manual, "vice" was put down in a prominent position in the chapter on Training Horses, but I am pleased to be able to record that I was instrumental in having that objectionable word removed. To speak of vice in a horse is to argue against your own knowledge and experience. The horse is so gentle by nature, so docile by disposition, so patient and forbearing, that vice must be something quite apart from his normal disposition.

When we see something that looks vicious, it is up to us to look for the reason. For instance, mares in June are "as fickle as a changeful dream," but if we regard them as vicious because they refuse, or kick, we simply proclaim that we do not understand horses. I remember noticing one day a lady was riding a horse that began to kick a little. He was not kicking really, he was only "protesting" against a strap which had got in between his back and the saddle. She promptly gave him a jolly good belting, accusing him of the most malicious motives. I explained as delicately as I could what had happened, but she said that it was no reason for his kicking, and gave him another "just to put him in his place." I wondered what she herself would have done had something fallen down her back, and whether she would not have taken steps to shake it out, and pretty quick too. But sometimes it is best to keep one's thoughts to oneself.

Rearing is another so-called vice, but it is usually started by bad riding or bad training. It is very easily put right with a little judicious handling. It sometimes occurs when a horse objects to leaving the stable yard, but if he is led out with a little encouragement, the trouble is soon over. If, on the other hand, we start hitting him, we may turn a "murmur" into a real fight, and an

incident into a habit. Or it may occur because we are pressing on with the training too quickly. For instance, perhaps we are asking him to jump a fence too big for him, or one that he does not like because it has a boggy take-off. The answer in such a case is to desist and not to force him. But these little "show ups" are too obviously not vice; it is absurd to designate them in that way. "For vice sometime's by action dignified," and once we understand the reason for the horses' temper we ourselves become more human, and we begin to overcome by tact what we regarded as incurable, and find it on examination to be nothing more or less than a misunderstanding.

Baucher on this subject says: "The rider, soon disgusted with the powerlessness of his own efforts, will blame the horse for his own ignorance, and he will call the animal a brute which probably possesses brilliant resources, and of which, with more discernment and aptitude, he might have made a riding horse both docile in character and graceful and comfortable in his paces. I have often noticed that those horses reputed untameable are those which develop the greatest energy and vigour as soon as the rider has put right the physical defects which impeded their movements."

Temper is, of course, a different thing from vice. The former is only temporary, while the latter is, or is supposed to be, of a permanent nature. But it is difficult in discussing these matters to differentiate with any exactitude between the two phases. It is, however, possible to ruin a horse's temper, and once this has been accomplished, it is final. No amount of kindness will bring back what has been irredeemably lost. It may be instances such as these which give colour to the "vice" idea, but mercifully they are somewhat rare in this country. They would never occur at all did we all know and understand how a horse should be treated. Vice is the reiteration of temper, and for those mathematically inclined we can express it thus:

$$T^n = V.$$

But, however we choose to express it, let us eliminate the word from our vocabulary, and I feel sure that if we do so we shall have made

a good step towards understanding the mentality, the thoughts and troubles of our good friend the horse.

I cannot conclude this chapter, however, without referring to one more point. It is in regard to the senseless and cruel practice of docking.

That it should have continued so long in this country is very surprising.

Some time ago the matter was threshed out in committee, but the "dockers" carried the day, although the arguments they produced appeared extremely weak to the casual reader.

The matter should not be allowed to rest here, and I hope it will be brought up again.

But the question is largely in the hands of the public. If we all decide never to buy a docked horse, the practice will stop very soon, and that is a quicker way than passing Acts of Parliament.

So let us make up our minds at once, and become supporters of anti-docking principles by never having a docked horse in our stables in the future.

Horses are sometimes inclined to kick after they have been docked, especially if their tails are touched when still sore, and for this they are often accused of "vice."

Once a man took over some of his docked horses to Russia, and all the street boys ran after him laughing at the absurdity.

So let us realise that it is nothing more than a habit, for which there is little reason, and in which is no beauty.

If we would only think a little bit more of the feelings and thoughts of the animals under our care, we should soon reap a rich harvest in the response they would give us.

NOTE.—In 1771 Berenger wrote: "The cruelty and absurdity of our notions and customs of docking and nicking tails, that we ply every day in the face of reason, nature, and humanity . . . a folly almost unbecoming the ignorance and cruelty of savages." Also, in A.D. 785, the Council of Calcuith passed the following canon: "From the influence of a vile and unbecoming custom, you deform and mutilate your horses—you cut off their tails—so as to make them odious and disgusting objects to all who see them." Let us remember Dryden's famous line:

"Who never made her work for man to mend."

XVIII

DOCILITY

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
Than that which parts you from some being more blessed ;
There may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
Than you in your shallow philosophy guessed.

EVERYONE knows the “horse is a docile animal,” but few reflect what a wonderful thing it is that this should be so. It is so obvious and commonplace that we do not dwell upon it more than upon any other established everyday fact. And yet, matters that are tacitly admitted are often not mentally grasped, or, in other words, the subject, like so many things in this world, has not been viewed through every aspect and examined with care and detachment. As we all admit that the horse is docile, let us, for once in a way, pursue this apparently unproductive pathway of thought and see where it leads us.

The horse, in its docility, will do all kinds of things for us with extremely little effort on our part, provided we are going slow. He will walk and trot and stop and turn at our pleasure, and as often as we wish. It is only when we begin to arouse his excitement by speed or pain that we find any difficulty at all. Not only will he walk and trot, but he will do a variety of more complicated feats, such as passaging, reining back, jumping, changing his legs, and so on, which are well known to anyone who has done any riding-school work. But, in spite of this amazing tractability, we find that when we go hunting or playing polo we have horses that won't stop or won't walk or won't turn, horses that pull and yaw, and horses that jig and tire us dreadfully by their indocility.

Now, why is this? Why does tractability suddenly become intractability? It seems odd, somehow, does it not? The answer often given is that it is speed or excitement which produces this result,

and that under such conditions the horse's mentality gives way and he is incapable of understanding what is required. This reply usually passes unchallenged, and the subject is dropped. But is it correct? We know ranching ponies when at speed are fully alive to and ready for the jerk of lasso; we know that horses while steeplechasing show much intelligence in negotiating the fences; and we know that polo ponies can be brought to a high pitch of intelligent obedience when ridden well. Consequently, it is felt that, as we come to examine this statement, we find it is not quite so conclusive as we thought. Personally, I think that the question should be tackled in a somewhat different way.

I submit that docility and intelligence are constant factors, no matter what we are doing with a horse, provided—and here is the real crux of the matter—the horse *understands what is required of him* and he is free from anxiety. Young horses, of course, have to learn, and youthful spirits are often very trying; but that is not the point. Once a horse really understands what is wanted and has no apprehension of jabs on the mouth or irritation from the spur, he will do what we ask of him. It is sometimes stated that horses have no intelligence, only memory. But this is an oblique line of argument that has no place in philosophy. Mind has Experience as its offspring, and memory is an attribute of mind.

The very fact that a horse possesses a long memory is in itself proof of considerable intelligence.

The more we deal sympathetically with horses, the more we understand the workings of their minds.

I have seen horses refuse to allow themselves to be mounted when riders have got spurs on, but who will stand perfectly still directly they take them off. Is this intelligence, or memory, or reason, or what?

Horses will not stop, because they do not understand they are meant to stop; horses will not walk, because they are fretting; polo ponies will not turn, because they have either not been properly taught or because the rider has quite forgotten to give them the right “aid” or because their mouths are so sore they can think of little

else. It is not the motion or the excitement that causes the apparent waywardness, but lack of training or faults in riding.

It may be interesting to my readers to know that it is perfectly possible to knock a polo ball about at a canter, turn and twist, and stop on any required spot and facing the desired way on any ordinarily schooled polo pony without a bridle at all. This is a very attractive experiment, and, of course, only applies to the slower paces, although I feel quite sure it could be done at speed after a little patient schooling. It is only a question of making the pony understand what is wanted. But it must never be forgotten that in our schooling we must endeavour to make our lessons as attractive as possible. A horse which has absolute confidence in his rider will, when an emergency arises, do his very best, and his best is worth more than a good deal; but if he is not quite confident, a refusal will be the probable reply.

Seydlitz, the well-known cavalry leader of the eighteenth century, was a noted trainer of horses, and he was riding with Frederick the Great one day across a bridge. In order to test his abilities Frederick suddenly said, "The enemy are pursuing you and there is a hostile squadron in front, what would you do?" Without a moment's hesitation Seydlitz jumped his horse over the parapet of the bridge into the water below. In due course he returned dripping from head to foot, saluted, and said, "Sire, that is what I would do." The bridge to this day bears the name of the "Seydlitz Brücke." The moral to be learnt from this tale is that that horse had implicit confidence in his rider, and obeyed without the slightest hesitation, because he never could have been let down. But I would be prepared to wager a large sum that that horse would never do the feat again. Once having been overfaced, implicit confidence would have been destroyed. Consequently, when we are training our horses, let us remember never intentionally to overtax their confidence, because they never forget.

I do not think it is necessary to go through a long course of riding school to achieve good results, nor is it necessary to spend much time in learning all the "aids." "Aids" vary with different schools,

PLATE XX.



ONCE A HORSE UNDERSTANDS, HE WILL GO ANYWHERE.

and it is of comparatively minor importance what particular "aid" is adopted as long as the horse understands. For instance, horses that have never been taught neck-reining will answer to that method of handling almost as readily as the schooled horse, although the actual "aids" of neck-reining are the exact converse of those used in the ordinary turn.

Once a horse understands that hunting is not a race meeting, he will shed his excitement, and when a horse realises that in a race he is expected to win, he will usually try his best. When a horse knows he is expected to jump temperately, he will do so. But these lessons have sometimes to be rather protracted. The young, excitable horse takes long to steady, and the horse that will not walk, much patience to make him. But my thesis is, that if we want a comfortable, temperate, and safe ride, we must convey our wishes to our mount in the way that can best be understood.

In polo, it is to be feared, most players are thinking more of the game than of their pony; but, did they put riding first and polo second, I think they would improve their game far more than they realise. Many ponies for which high prices have been given, and which are splendidly trained, often become hard pullers in the hands of even first-class players. Such players, of course, are only thinking of the ball, and for the time being forget how to convey their wishes to their mount, with the unfortunate results they themselves know only too well. But the pony will do it all right once he understands what he is wanted to do. The docility is there all the time. The pony, indeed, is willing; it is up to us to do the rest. So we get back to the old motto, "Blame yourself before you blame your horse," and, once we understand that, we are already well on the road to understanding the thoughts in the horse's mind.

XIX

RIDING FOR YOUNG AND OLD

That every boy on holiday
And girl from lessons freed
Might see as much as grown-ups may
When foxes run at speed.

And there should be no jealous lads
Nor tearful lasses found ;
For he'd have brushes, masks and pads
Sufficient to go round.

And he would choose a careful line,
Avoiding wire and walls,
That little folk of eight or nine
Should have but "comfy" falls.

IT is often said that few who have not ridden when young will ride well when grown up, and it is said, perhaps still more often, that middle-aged men are too old to begin. Curiously enough, neither of the statements is strictly accurate and, like so many other beliefs, they will not stand the light of examination or the results of actual experience.

RIDING FOR CHILDREN

It is supposed that people who have ridden all their lives, from donkeys to ponies, from ponies to cobs, and from cobs to hunters, must necessarily ride better than those who begin to ride only in adolescence or early manhood. This supposition, however, presupposes that the instruction has been throughout beneficial and sound, because it would obviously not lead to good results if the principles taught were faulty or negligible. Although instruction has improved very much during the last few years, owing to the establishment of Pony Clubs all over the country, there is still a good deal more to be desired. We see small children out with grooms everywhere. They are sitting all wrong, and are committing almost every enormity in equestrianism unchecked and unnoticed. Their

so-called lessons are only surrounding them with an extensive crop of errors they may never grow out of, and yet their parents fondly believe they are learning to ride!

In many cases they enjoy themselves hugely, and in so far we all love to see them having a happy time; but that is not the point. We must remember that although they may love their ride, they are not learning riding. I can well remember my own early days. What an intense and unbalancing excitement it was when I had a pony to ride, and we would be heartless indeed to do anything to deny youngsters the pleasures of the saddle. So I must at once make my point clear. Very youthful riding, though usually a pleasure, is seldom an education.

I think all riding masters in cavalry regiments will agree with me when I say that we can always get on better with a young subaltern who has never ridden before than with one who has ridden "all his life." We have seen it so often. The more "experienced" recruit officer will for a month or so be better than the other, but by the time a year is out there is nothing to choose between them, except that it is often odds on the beginner. As this is a quite admitted fact, it shows very clearly that it is not necessary to ride young to ride well, and that riding muscles can be developed without beginning in the cradle.

The next point is that many people say it is good for the nerves to ride young, because the early habituation must be so beneficial that it necessarily gives confidence for the rest of life. Unfortunately, this is not the case. We have two classes of children—the bold and the timid. The bold ones may easily lose their nerve, and the timid may never find it. In the one case their riding is an anxiety to their parents, and in the other to themselves.

I fear we all know cases of children who, keen enough to begin with, suddenly refuse to get into the saddle again because of some fright or fall they may have experienced. If, therefore, we want our children to ride, we must remember that it is not necessarily going to help them to be first-class horsemen in the future, and that there is a risk of "putting them off" riding altogether. It is a

MOUNT AND MAN

matter upon which too much care cannot be bestowed. Let them ride by all means, but try to see they do not get into bad habits, and avoid the possibility of accident or fright to the limit of precaution.

If the parents are not in a position to give them riding facilities, then they can console themselves with the thought that they will be none the worse horsemen for all that when they reach a later age.



Right.

FIG. 34.
Toe down.

Too short.

RIDING FOR THE OLD

There are a very great number of people who have never had an opportunity of riding until they have reached middle age. When at last, perhaps after many years on an office stool, they find themselves able to ride, they are put off by their friends. They are told that it is only by long and protracted study when young that any efficiency can be attained; that it is dangerous to make any attempt; that riding muscles will be sprained, collar bones broken; that their horses will run away with them, and so on indefinitely—agony piled on agony, so that he is a bold man indeed who will still attempt this hazardous enterprise. If he is of a sufficiently obstinate nature he may discount the advice he gets to its proper value, but he has still



INSTRUCTION BY GROOMS LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

one more obstacle to overcome. No man likes to be laughed at, and all hate to look foolish. Without proper instruction he knows he will cut a ridiculous figure, and the mysteries of the hunting field are very alarming to a man of importance and position in his own particular walk of life. The result of all this is that he never rides at all.

It is a great pity, because instruction upon right lines can produce wonderful results very speedily, and without nerve-racking or muscle-breaking exercises. As a case in point, I know of a man over fifty years of age who could not "ride for toffee." Within four days he was jumping small fences and enjoying every minute of it. In other words, although it is possible to be too young to begin, it is never too late to learn.

As to hunting, it is not difficult to find friends who will put one right in regard to dress and the unwritten laws. In these days, hunting wants all the support it can get, and if the gulf could be bridged between those that would like to and those that do, we should go far in keeping hunting alive.

Sometimes it strikes me that what is wanted is a book called "Why?" If people could be told the reasons for things, we would not see so many absurdities about. For instance, take a hunting crop. It has reasons for its make and shape and balance which once realised would make selection an easy matter. But we see many beginners with one that seems to have been purchased from the grocer, and "knuts" with some "doggy" notions which may be very clever but do not open gates. It is the same with spurs and, in fact, all articles of equipment. Once we know the reason why, we can never make an unpractical mistake.

If, therefore, we assure the beginner, no matter how late in life he may wish to start, that he can quite quickly ride well, and that he need never be wrongly turned out, so that no one will know he is a veritable tyro, I feel confident we shall attract many men to the saddle who have hitherto suppressed their natural inclinations in that direction. This would be to the advantage of hunting and of horse breeding, and of many things and people which go to make the English countryside the most attractive place on earth.

XX

STEEPLECHASING

ONE of the great fallacies in the views which many people adopt when speaking of riding is to put it into water-tight compartments.

They insist upon thinking that there is one way for sitting in the Show Ring, another way for hunting, and another way for steeplechasing. As long as these views are maintained so long will confusion of thought occur.

The art of riding should be one complete science, each part fitting into its proper place. It is no use thinking one can achieve outstanding success by study in one phase only. And in no particular is this more important than in the racing world, especially in view of the money at stake.

It is surprising how prevalent these views are, and they seem to permeate every branch of horsemanship.

A book was published not so long ago which stated that the "forward" or "balanced" seat might be satisfactory enough in an ordinary day's hunting, but could not possibly be advocated when the scent was breast high! The writer made no attempt to elucidate the mystery. We all know the scent of a fox is fairly powerful, but that it would be able to change the laws of dynamics and gravitation is something quite new. This was not stated humorously, as one might suppose, but with all the weight of the experience of a well-known rider to hounds. So with the steeplechasing world, they regard their problems from a purely parochial standpoint—their breadth of view is limited to the racecourse and the galloping track.

They ridicule any suggestion of improvement, and deny all

PLATE XXII.



STRONG FENCES WHERE RIDERS HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM.

suggestion of riding-school teaching. They concentrate entirely upon the supposed position which is best for a jockey in the race, and insist upon his riding on all occasions with the short stirrup. In fact, jockeys carry this so far that neither can they nor do they wish to ride in any other fashion.

It must be remembered that no one can see what a jockey does with any accuracy from the Grand Stand. The pace is too quick and the distance is too far for the eye to take in any detail. So that, provided the jockey wins his race, he is proclaimed by the owner, trainer, and backers as a splendid horseman.

The only opinion not considered is that of the horse.

In the old days, before instantaneous photography was brought to such a high pitch of excellence, there was every excuse for the public being misled, but in these days there is no such excuse. We see daily in the papers positions which are so faulty that one sometimes wonders how the rider or horse survives.

At a National a little while ago two horses were racing at the last fence for first and second place. If there was a moment at which the horse's head should be left alone, it was this—and yet we saw both jockeys being carried over the fence by the horses' mouths, and it speaks volumes for the astonishing endurance of the gallant horses that they had carried their riders successfully over this difficult and lengthy course.

It has caused frequent comment among race-going people that falls in steeplechasing are very common, and the reason is not far to seek. When you come to think of it, why should horses fall so much? The going is usually first class, the "take off" and "land" are perfect, the fences are superlatively fair, they are not above the capacity of any good jumper, and the horse can go through many inches without a fall. I therefore ask, "What can the cause of these disasters be?" In the opinion of many to-day steeplechasing has deteriorated in recent years, due to the over-short stirrup the jockeys affect. In the old days the custom was always to keep the knee pointed on landing, and this most excellent rule seems to have been forgotten. The "forward seat" is being considerably adopted in

hurdle racing, but it is the "forward seat," not the "balanced seat." It is particularly to be noted that the jockeys, when throwing their bodies forward, have their feet forward too. This is not only extremely uncomfortable, but it is an abrogation of all good horsemanship, and it is no wonder when these things are practised that the so-called "forward seat" has not met with general acceptance.

Then, again, if a jockey rides too short he has no lateral control, and this is another instance which makes accidents and mishaps so prevalent.

One refusing horse will sweep aside half a dozen others like ninepins, as happened in a National a little while ago, because of this very grave fault in horsemanship.

There was another case I remember in a recent National, where the favourite on which thousands of pounds had been invested swerved to avoid a fallen jockey, and the rider fell off. These are points which do not redound to the credit of English riding, and could not occur under a scientific system of schooling. It has been said that with the pace races are run nowadays every excuse must be made for the jockeys, and the jar on landing is so great that nothing but a fully back seat is feasible. And this remark might stand if it were not for the fact that we alone of all nations support this form of riding.

Either we are too insular and dislike taking any hints from foreigners, or we do not study the advance in modern horsemanship sufficiently. It is this last reason I believe to be the true one.

The modern "balanced" seat now universally adopted on the Continent cannot be picked up casually, but considerable practice and study is necessary, and this study is not attained by schooling over jump courses at a gallop, but by studying the whole art of horsemanship from the beginning.

Not only must the jockey so train himself, but the trainer also should be a profound student of the art of equitation.

I believe that some trainers think that a good way to quicken up a horse at his fences is to put him over hurdles, and this I know



was the procedure of one trainer as a preparation for entering a horse for the National.

No one who had studied the training of horses scientifically could ever have made such a mistake.

Therefore I am convinced that the most successful trainers and jockeys in the future will be those who first master these principles.

It must be an axiom that no horse or man can successfully negotiate a big fence until he has jumped a small one correctly. And many months can be usefully employed in meticulous training in elementary exercises.

The horse must be taught to jump off his hocks with freedom, and the jockey must learn in no circumstances to interfere with the horse's head during the leap. He must learn to go with the horse—he must learn to absorb the shock of impact in the knee-joint, and to be able to hold his reins in such a way that they do not slip through his fingers, but preserve contact throughout with the horse's mouth, in such a way that he will be able to carry on with the race immediately on landing as if there had not been a fence at all.

The position of the body is a comparatively small matter, and will adjust itself directly the other points I have just mentioned have been mastered. When these things have been thoroughly assimilated the interminable arguments about whether the body must be back when landing over Becher's, etc., will be found to have answered themselves.

There is no difficulty in jumping that or any other fence at whatever speed or under whatever conditions provided the "balanced" seat is adopted.

I am putting in this chapter two line drawings which are taken from photographs of English steeplechasing and of Continental riding. The fences that are jumped on the Continent are often much larger than any fences we know in this country. Whoever has heard on this side of the Channel of a fence 6 feet 8 inches high, and yet these are the kind of obstacles that are met with on the Continent, where the riders jump them at speed and on horses far inferior to our magnificent English and Irish cattle.

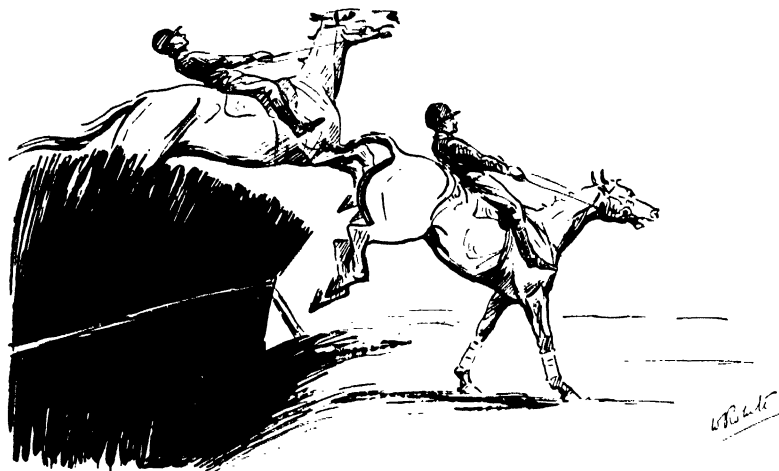


FIG. 35.

Note the seats of these English jockeys, which have been taken from a recent photo.

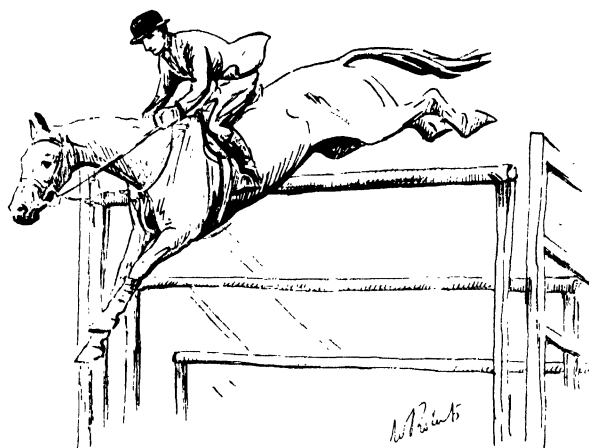


FIG. 36.

This Italian rider is jumping a much bigger fence at probably greater speed than even the jockeys. The control and complete ease with which it is performed speak for themselves.

Therefore I beg my readers to think over these words, and it is to be hoped that it will not be long before we once more assert our superiority in this and in all other forms of horsemanship, which unfortunately is not the case to-day.

In support of these views, I feel I cannot do better than finish this chapter with extracts from a letter that appeared in "Horse and Hound" in January, 1935. It so admirably expresses the Continental point of view that I have obtained Mr. Schiller's permission to reprint it.

Though, remarkably enough, there seems to be little opposition in this country to the forward seat for show jumping, the majority of riders (professional and amateur) still try to reject it as unfit for steeplechasing or hunting. I say "try" to reject it, because gradually, almost unnoticeably, it is coming along, and there are unmistakable indications that it will in time conquer the most ardent "strap-hangers." Personally I cannot, hard as I may try, figure out the reasons why the mechanical execution of the riding proper should have to be different, because not one of the arguments brought forth by the followers of the old school stands a sober, unbiased investigation. I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I now say that, quite naturally, over unknown jumps or on a strange horse, or in anticipation of unforeseen occurrences (as in steeplechasing and hunting), one is bound to ride with a certain amount of precaution, being on the *qui vive* as it were, which is not necessary to this degree in show jumping, where, as a rule, horse and rider know each other well and have both been over the same or similar obstacles, perhaps hundreds of times. But being on the alert does not mean that we must lean backwards at any phase of the jump, not even in landing.

It is logical that if a horse lands badly and his forward movement is suddenly interrupted—as in a peck—we must, or rather *should*, at the very same instant retard our own momentum, lest we go straight over the horse's head. But that does not mean that we "sit back." This retarding of our momentum by "holding back our body," if I may say so, is entirely different from "sitting back," for, if carried out correctly, the legs do *not* change their position, whereas "sitting back" must invariably result in the legs being swung forward, whereby the foremost principle of the forward seat, *contact with the horse*, is lost. Also, in my opinion, it is *not* a help to the horse if at this critical moment we pull at his head! If we watch a horse trying to get up we shall find that he does *not* throw his head up first, as those riders who lean back and pull at his mouth in an endeavour to recover him must believe.

When schooling a young horse over jumps, the first few experiences over an obstacle may be decisive for the future career of the youngster, and everything that could possibly make him feel uncomfortable (either in his mouth or in his back) should anxiously be avoided. In holding on to the breast-plate or the neck strap of

a martingale all risks of possible jars and jerks are eliminated, which otherwise would be quite unavoidable on a green and unsafe jumper. I do not hesitate to say that I do this more often than not, because the main thing is *non-interference with the horse's mouth and back*. And rather than hold on to the reins and bump into his loins I would have people point their fingers at me with a certain malicious: "Aha—holding on to the saddle!"

No—I really don't think that there are many sportsmen in this country who deliberately would deny that the forward seat over really stiff jumps has, so to say, become imperative. No doubt there are a few lonely virtuosi of the orthodox school who can "jump almost anything"; but, even so, I should like to see them in a Continental final, taking an oxer 6 feet 8 inches high and 6 feet 8 inches wide (*not* the record) in "Aintree-fashion"! A horse who will jump such a formidable bit of something will naturally get some steam up, but personally I find it miles easier to hold a "hot one" since riding the forward seat, and I have actually experienced that sometimes horses who are pronounced pullers under their conventionally seated owners are surprisingly easy to hold in the forward seat. The fact that *five out of six irons are lost over the last fence* at Aintree is not surprising at all. One just has to look at the hundreds of Aintree photos to realise this, for they show, with very few exceptions, that contact with the saddle (by means of the knees)—and consequently with the irons—is completely lost over every jump, not only the last one. These jockeys are artists! What they achieve is marvellous, and I cannot but have the highest respect for their acrobatics, pluck, and courage! But—that does not mean that the Grand National would not be an entirely different race if it were ridden by jockeys who have been *taught* how to ride over jumps. There would be less of the "rough-and-tumble," and instead of four out of forty horses passing the post the public would probably be able to enjoy a real battle at the last fence home, because falls would then be restricted to that small percentage of blunders which always occur whenever and wherever horses go "across a country." This from one who has never had the chance to go over the Aintree course may sound somewhat assuming; but I can assure you that what I say is backed by men with much more experience on this subject than I have—*i.e.*, Continental professionals. Green jumps of 5 feet 2 inches (the highest at Aintree) are not exclusive to the Liverpool course; they occur on Continental racecourses as well, with some solid timber of 4 feet 5 inches thrown in to bring some change into the fun.

We cannot all be experts, but we can endeavour to *learn* and to come as near perfection as is, individually, possible. It took fully fifteen years until the fighting old brigade on the Continent accepted—unrestrictedly—the theories of the originator of the forward seat, the late Captain Caprilli, of Pinerolo. It may take just as long, or perhaps longer, until this "horsey creed" finds access and recognition in this country, and I should be very proud if later on I were credited with having tried my feeble best to help those experts who, by their knowledge and experience, are truly called to spread it. The English have more natural talent for a horse than any other nation I know; they certainly have the best horses that can be found anywhere, and

if they follow a method which has successfully been adopted everywhere except in England they must become *supreme*—as Lieut.-Colonel F. M. McTaggart very rightly says in his foreword to Captain Piero Santini's book, and which I strongly recommend every serious rider to read !

Yours, etc.,

F. WM. SCHILLER.

XXI

CAN SADDLES BE IMPROVED ?

I've lived my life, I've nearly done,
I've played the game all round ;
But I'm free to confess that the best of my fun
I owe to horse and hound.

WE have grown up and lived with the saddle as we know it to-day, and we are so accustomed to its shape and appearance that criticism comes as rather a surprise. It is ridden in and seen so frequently that it is rare to hear discussion upon its merits or demerits. Almost every other point of riding, of horse mastery, of horse management, and of equipment is discussed daily, but the saddle is accepted as it is, without comment or controversy.

But is the hunting saddle, as we know it to-day in England, the best shape that can be devised? It has undoubtedly gone through many changes in the past century. We have had longer flaps, flaps cut forward and flaps cut straight ; we have had knee rolls, padded seats, front arches cut back, leather and linen covered padding, safety bars, and so on ; but the principle of the seat has remained much the same. Abroad, we have had a variety of different seats to study—the Mexican, the Arab, the Colonial, the Spanish, and some others. All these are very different in shape and appearance from the one we ride in this country to-day. Consequently, it is as well that we should realise that our present saddle is not necessarily perfect and that it is a subject which is well worth thinking over.

The correct balance of the rider in the saddle was discussed at some length in Chapter I. We must now look into the balance of the horse and see to what extent we can make the two coincide. If we can build a saddle which will co-ordinate the two, then we shall

have made a definite step forward in the progress of riding. So let us first of all look at Fig. 37 and study the outline of an ordinary hunting saddle.

The line A—B represents the line of the stirrup leathers, when hanging naturally. C represents the position for the rider's seat into which it is practically forced. Consequently, as the feet are so much in advance of the seat, when at the standstill and the walk, the tendency is always for the seat to keep slipping (or being pushed by the pressure of the feet) still farther back. As the seat slips back it brings the feet farther forward, and the normal position for them is

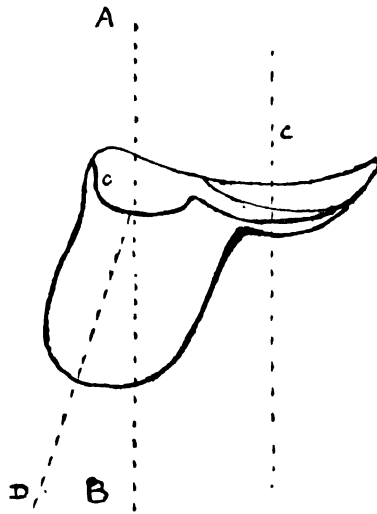


FIG. 37.

on the line D. With saddles so made, it is rare to see a stirrup leather kept in a vertical position for this very reason.

We all know of this tendency, and of the difficulty in counteracting it. It produces two distinct faults. First, it puts the rider "behind his work." If the horse gives a sudden movement, any rider knows only too well the difficulties that are experienced. In such a position we are in no way prepared for the unexpected, or capable of counteracting it. Before we can do any good, we have to remove the seat from the saddle and throw the body forward. It is

somewhat like the recruit standing on his heels on parade. He cannot carry out the word of command until he has got into the true position of attention, with the weight of his body upon the fore part of his feet.

Secondly, it is the wrong position for a horse to carry weight. Many an early morning buck or "heave up" is caused by this. So-called "cold backs" and other sources of liveliness are often due to the fact that horses hate to feel pressure upon this part of their anatomy. The infantryman knows well that unless he gets his pack well up on his shoulders, he will never complete even a short march without distress, and the same rule applies to all animals in their capacity for carrying a burden.

Side saddles are particularly bad in this respect, and every saddler will tell of the difficulties that have to be encountered and the positive discomfort which is often occasioned to the horse by having to carry so much weight on his loins. It is, therefore, no point of contention if it is asserted that it must be wrong to ask the horse to carry the rider's weight upon this portion of his back for any except momentary periods, and it suggests there must be something not quite scientifically correct in the build of the modern saddle. So let us closely examine this matter to see if it is not possible to overcome these difficulties to a certain extent.

It is the ideal of all horsemen to be "one" with their horses. When this is effected it means simply that the rider's balance is working in conjunction with the horse's balance. To put it in other words, it implies that the rider's line of equipoise passes vertically through the horse's centre of gravity.

Let us look at Fig. 38. A horse's centre of gravity is to be found within a spot varying within the circle shown. It is not a fixed point, it varies for several reasons. The way the head is carried is one important reason for variation. We have also considerations of dynamics, of angles of elevation and descent, and so on, which produce slight differences in the point of balance. But it is sufficient to say that, generally speaking, it will always be found somewhere within this circle. It must, therefore, be necessary for us to get our

own balance as near this point as is possible. This means that the rider's line of equipoise should pass vertically through the centre of this circle for the "neutral" position.

If we look at Fig. 39, the dotted line A—B represents the rider's balancing line. Now, before we proceed to place our rider upon the horse's back, let us see how he looks on the ground. A rider to be balanced must, of course, be balanced from his feet, even when in the saddle, and although there may be many an occasion in riding when he is not so balanced, those occasions should be as infrequent and as fleeting as possible. So let us turn to Fig. 40.

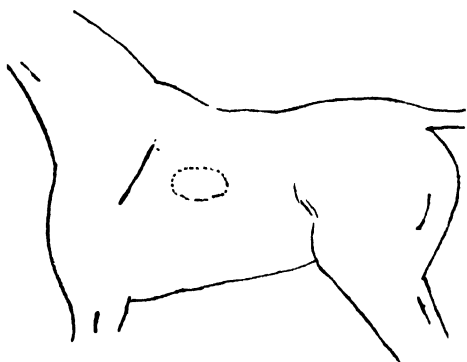


FIG. 38.

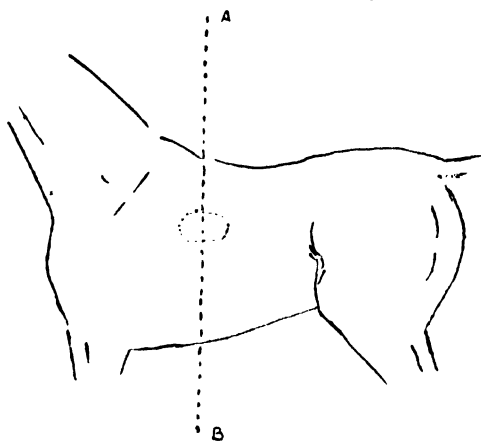


FIG. 39.

The line A—B represents his balancing line or line of equipoise. The line C—D shows the position relatively to the line of equipoise of his seat bones. These two lines are, it will be seen, comparatively close together. But if we look back at Fig. 37, we shall see that in the modern saddle the lines are very much farther apart, proportionately.

If the rider were to bend his knees a little more (as when shortening his stirrups), the seat bones would be pushed farther back. Generally speaking, 1 inch shorter in the leather drives the seat bones back 4 inches. But this does not affect the argument. It is merely a question of degree and not of principle.

This rider is balanced from his feet, which the rider in the saddle

MOUNT AND MAN

of Fig. 37 would find it very difficult to be, and so he is in the first position of a horseman—balanced. Now, before we put our prospective horseman upon his mount we must look at the saddle we intend him to bestride.



FIG. 40.

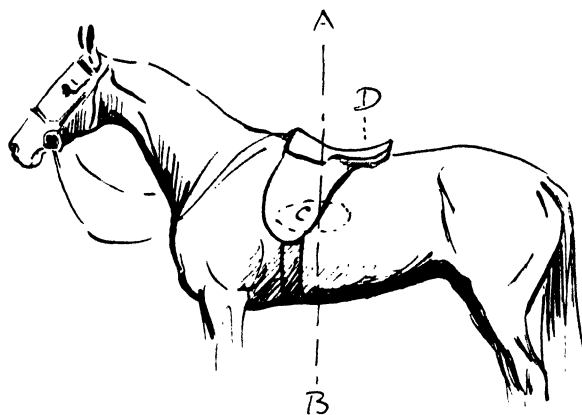


FIG. 41.

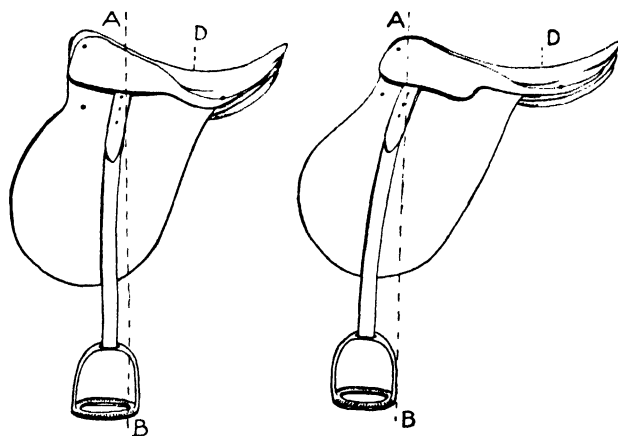


FIG. 42.

In Fig. 41 we see the saddle placed on the horse's back. It is a little farther forward than usual, and the pommel is a little higher in consequence. At first glance it may not appear to be particularly different from the ordinary saddle, and, of course, it is not intended that it should be. In detail, however, when we come to look we

shall find several points of novelty and divergence from the old pattern.

Here the line A—B represents the natural line of the stirrup leather passing through the horse's centre of gravity, marked C. This is the theoretical position of the leathers. In practice it is found that it affects the balance imperceptibly if they hang ordinarily, while if they are placed as far back as drawn the buckle catches the thigh uncomfortably. D represents the position of the rider's seat bones. It should be noted that the saddle is more

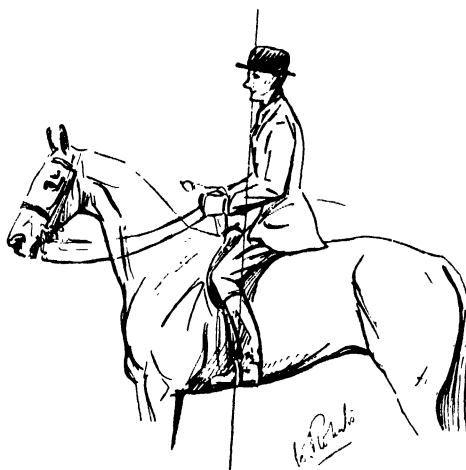


FIG. 43.

forward on the horse's back than in the usual saddle, and the rider's weight is clear of the loin. In order to attain this it has been necessary to put the girths a little farther back on the tree, but the side bars remain in practically the same position with reference to the horse.

The diagram (Fig. 42) will show the differences fairly clearly. As the tree has been cut forward the flaps, although appearing to be cut further back, are actually as far forward as they can be in any saddle, as otherwise the action of the horse's shoulders would be interfered with. Another advantage is that in the ordinary hunting saddle the

pommel is higher than the cantle, but in this diagram the cantle is as high as the pommel. This prevents the rider slipping back. Now we will place our friend of Fig. 40 upon this saddle and see how he looks, so that when in Fig. 48 we have the rider on the horse's back, he will not have to ride so short as he did before.* He will be able to ride quite an inch longer, and that will give him greater freedom and less exertion. He will find he has greater control and will not always be slipping back. On this matter Fillis writes: "The high school seat is forward in the dip of the saddle. Personally I prefer this seat for all purposes, for the horse carries the weight on the strongest part of his back, just behind the withers, where there is also the least amount of movement if he 'plays up.'"

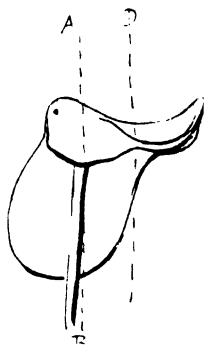


FIG. 44.

Fig. 44 is the pattern of the saddle which I have devised for my own riding, and I have ridden in it for many years. It can be seen at Messrs. Owen and Co., 62, Duke Street. This saddle is suitable for all departments of horsemanship. It is equally good for jumping or hack work. It differs considerably in appearance from the one advocated by the Italians, and for jumping exclusively theirs has a great deal to recommend it, being very comfortable and effective. At the same time there are certain points of similarity between the

* "The knees should be well forward in the saddle so that the seat bones are well under the body."—CAUBERT.

two saddles. The cantle is as high as the pommel in each case and the rider sits well down in the centre of the saddle. But in my opinion the Italian model is not so useful for general purposes.

It is interesting to know that a lady's side saddle for the forward seat has been already in existence for some time, and its principles are exactly in accordance with those advocated in this chapter.

NOTE.—L'assiette est la première chose à assurer et doit toujours être fixée avant de faire toute autre chose, par conséquent dès que le corps entre en selle.

Il y a quatre choses à observer : 1. De placer son poids suffisamment en avant la selle. 2. De fixer bien les genoux sur la partie rembrunée du panneau. 3. La juste longueur en position des étriers. 4. L'attitude du corps.

Le poids du corps devrait être bien en avant, parce que le centre du mouvement est proche du milieu de la selle, et comme le poids est en grande partie dans le siège. Si l'on jette l'assiette en arrière, ce poids s'agit plus au centre mais vers la troussequin.

Mais en s'asseyant bien en avant, le poids est réparti entre le siège, les cuisses, et les pieds, et le cheval peut se lever et s'abaisser dans son galop sans déranger son cavalier.

Le but de tous les nouveaux cavaliers doit être d'aller le plus possible vers l'avant de la selle (1870).

XXII

WHIP AND SPUR

“L'éperon est la dernière expression des jambes.”

EVERYBODY who rides is advised to have a stick, cane, crop, or whip in his hand. But this does not mean that it should be used for any kind of punishment, but for convenience, guidance, and encouragement only.

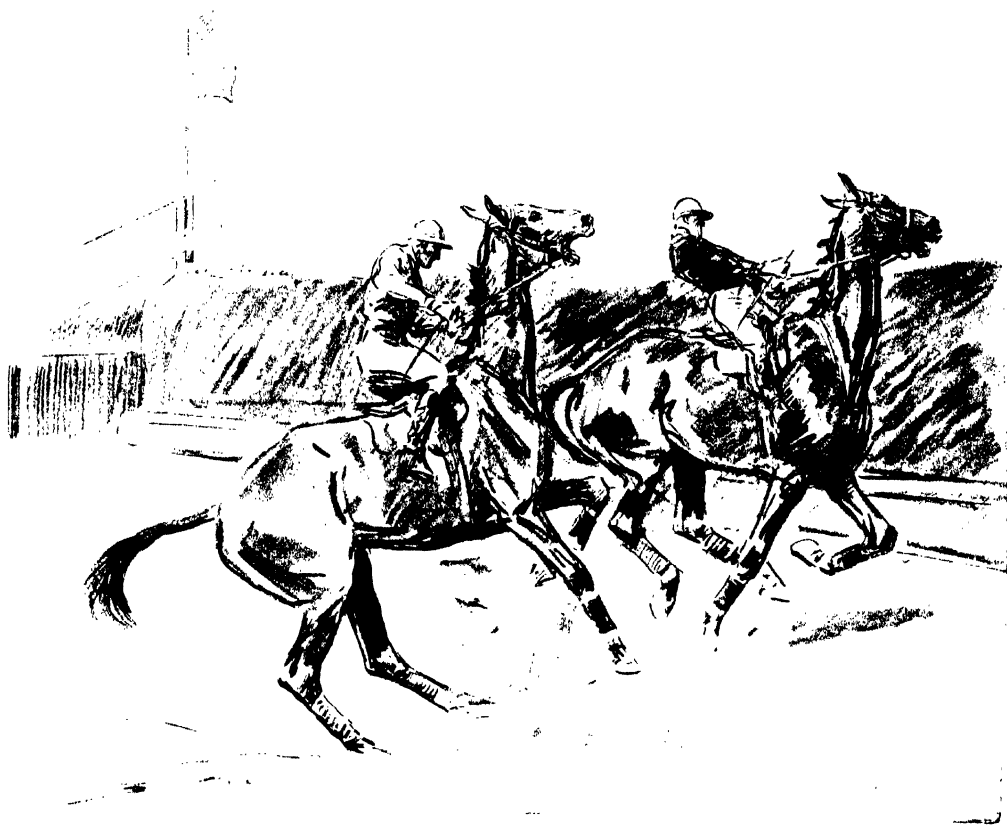
The idea of punishment should be eliminated entirely. The more I ride and the more I think over the mentality of the horse the more I realise that not only is punishment undeserved, but it is very detrimental to any subsequent dealings with him. Most people are opposed to a severe use of the whip, but few go so far as to advocate its total abolition.

The idea that punishment is sometimes essential is very deep-seated amongst most trainers of horses. “Hit him seldom, hit him quick, and hit him hard,” is an old dictum. But I have never seen one atom of good obtained by such methods that could not have been obtained better without them. I admit horses are often very trying, sometimes we know that they can jump but won't jump, and the natural impulse is to enforce obedience by the plentiful use of the whip.

Geldings, when they are getting on in years, give one a good example. They occasionally lose all taste for jumping, very often on account of unfortunate memories, and contract the habit of refusing. Although this seems to be a case where the whip might be justifiably used, it produces no good results; in fact, it sours the horse more than ever.

Therefore in such circumstances the thing to remember is that the horse is no longer reliable for jumping, and the best thing to do is to put him to something else. On the other occasions when people

PLATE XXIV.



SHARP SPURS DO NO GOOD.

The use of the stick in jumping is not always understood. When horses refuse sometimes people hit them at the standstill when they are peering over the fence. Others, when turning away from the fence, rouse them up with the cane, and others put the stick on them at the moment they start afresh at the jump.

All these moments are incorrect. The only effective way is for the rider to use his legs firmly and to encourage the horse at the moment of "take off" by putting the cane firmly down his shoulder.

Needless to say, I am very opposed to hitting them on their quarters or on their ribs.

The whip in racing is a point rather too long to discuss in this short chapter. Generally speaking, our best jockeys use the whip very judiciously. But I think that it would be a beneficial thing if the whip for two-year-olds should be abolished as a start.* And I also think it would be a very good thing if the Jockey Club and the Stewards of the National Hunt Committee would issue a rule that no jockey should carry anything else than a standard pattern cane.

Spurs.—I am glad to say that the use of sharp spurs has gone

* Geoffrey Gilbey, the well-known racing expert, in writing in the *Daily Express*, November 30, 1929, advocated the abolition of the whip in two-year-old races.

out almost entirely. We never see them on the polo ground, and I think I may say they are equally rare on the racecourse. In hunting blunt spurs are now almost universally used. For hacking I am glad to see that their use is getting very much less.* I think the idea of spurs would entirely disappear if it was realised that they are adjuncts for weak legs. The strong rider, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the rider who knows how to use his legs, does not require them at all. And I may say definitely that a spur has never made a horse jump yet. I can truthfully state that I have trained a good many horses in my life to a high standard, and I never use a spur.

* Whyte Melville wrote: "I firmly believe that 9 out of 10 men would be better and more safely conveyed if they left their spurs at home."

XXIII

WHY DO HORSES SHY?

But I thought, "I'd give something to have his receipt,
A rum one to follow, a bad one to beat."

WE all know that some horses are badly addicted to this habit, and others are not. Most of us accept the fact as being purely temperamental and leave it at that. We know that some horses are very much more nervous than others, and we suppose that it is due to this alone that some horses "behave like perfect idiots." This supposition passes muster as long as we do not think about it, but to those of us who are not content with shallow solutions, it does not seem to be even an explanation, far less a proof. It does not even state facts.

We all know of nervous, highly sensitive horses who do not shy at all, and we also have often had real trouble with a commoner who does not appear to have any nerves whatever until he meets a steam-roller. We know of very nearly as many old horses who shy as we do of young ones. We know of lots of young ones who do not shy at all. So when we come to think it out we find there must be some other reason than mere sensitiveness. Before we go further there are two reasons we will get out of the way at once, and they are "eyesight" and "freshness."

It is often said that a horse with defective eyesight shies. This may or may not be the case. Personally, I do not think there is much in it. But if it is the real reason, then I suppose it would be incurable (unless we introduced spectacles!), and there is nothing more to be said.

The second one, due to freshness, is not shying really. It is a little sort of a joke, or game, on the part of the horse. I admit it often becomes quite serious if the rider is nervous and inefficient, but if it is treated as only play, it is soon over, and is of little or no importance. It is, however, the real systematic shying that we

want to discuss and to understand. It is so tedious, so difficult to cure, and requires sometimes more than all our patience, but the reason for it is merely a matter of upbringing.

It is well known that with Irish horses the habit is more prevalent than with English ones, for the reason that Irish horses, when youngsters, have seen less of the novelties of modern civilisation than those bred on this side.

The horse that has been brought up in a paddock beside a railway line does not shy at trains, and horses that have been accustomed all their lives to strange sights shy at nothing. So the first thing is to see that our young stock "mix in society" as much as possible. They should see motors and hay carts, and trains, and bicycles, and wheelbarrows, and steam-lorries, from their earliest youth. If that can be done, then they will not shy at these things, or indeed any other things, when they are taken up and ridden later on. But, of course, it is not always possible to have paddocks so situated. It often must be that the field in which they spend their early days is far away from noise, and roads, and rollers. In such circumstances some difficulty will probably be experienced when they are first taken up and find themselves amidst new surroundings.

But the difficulty will soon fade, provided we put them into loose-boxes which look out into the stable yard. Here they will stand all day long if we will let them, with their heads out, looking at all the things that are to be seen, with evident enjoyment and interest. Horses treated like this do not shy. But what usually happens? They are tied up in either a stall facing a blank wall or else in boxes from which they can see nothing. In such circumstances is it to be wondered at that they are frightened at the many strange sights to be seen when out of doors?

Although we are a nation of horse owners and have prided ourselves on our knowledge of horse management, we are only beginning to understand how horses ought really to be treated. We should look upon them as highly intelligent creatures, whose intellect wants stirring, and not as hay forks to be locked away in the dark after their work is done. We find in other countries this ques-

tion of shying hardly exists, and there is no reason why it should with us. Hitherto we have tackled the problem in the wrong way. This is particularly noticeable in connection with blinkers in harness. The only two reasons I have ever heard for their use are, first, that breaking in a young horse to harness, the sight of the wheels pursuing him causes fright ; and second, that he would always be watching the whip hand of the driver and would be jumping away from every movement were it not for the blinkers. If these are the only reasons, and I have never heard any others, they are very weak ones.

Training the horse to the sight of the wheels is so simple a matter that it is hardly worth bothering about. We see horses everywhere in other countries being driven without blinkers and no difficulty is experienced. So that it is simply impossible to support the contention that there is any danger or difficulty in it.

The other argument that the horse jumps to the movement of the driver's arm only shows that the coachman does not know how to use the whip. When the whip is used properly it is an encouragement, and when so used would cause no alarm on the horse's part. A most common occurrence is, when a horse has shied at something, for the driver to punish him with the whip, instead of giving him encouragement by stroking him with it and speaking to him in a soothing way. So such a contention is a complete "give away," and proclaims bad management and bad coachmanship.

Unfortunately the prevalence of blinkers seems to be increasing. Not only are ordinary blinkers practically always used (and they very often fit very badly), but hooded blinkers are coming in, especially in the streets of London. This is a custom that we all ought to do everything in our power to stop ; although it cannot be described as physical cruelty, it is probably one of considerable mental suffering.

Let us put ourselves into the place of the horse for a moment. He is very likely stabled in a dark stall, facing a blank wall whenever he is not at work. When he comes out the light is very likely too strong for him, and he shies at some passing object. Whereupon the blinkers are made blind blinkers, and for evermore he is forced to draw his load through the streets seeing nothing whatever. Surely all

horse lovers should raise their voices against this practice. Let a horse see all he can and he will give up shying, but to commit him to perpetual darkness is surely the incorrect way of tackling the problem.

The horse is so entirely sensible if we will only allow him to know what he is doing and what is expected of him, that it is such a pity we do not treat him with *sympathy* and intelligence.

Those who travel cannot help noticing these things, but those who "only England know" are very liable to allow custom to blunt their critical faculties, and to be content to leave things as they are.

From the æsthetic point of view the blinker is, of course, a most hideous thing. It is only custom which makes it tolerable. It would be an excellent thing if it were, by mutual agreement, totally abolished. There is only one place for it, and that is in museums.

The way to handle a horse when he shies is important, because we so often see the problem dealt with in the wrong way.

What often happens is this. The horse sees something, begins to prick his ears at it and to turn his quarters away, whereupon the rider gives him a really good whack, jams the spurs into him, and forces him past the object.

This is the regular roughrider's trick, who thereby gets a spurious reputation for being a "strong" rider.

In effect, what has happened is this. The horse is suspicious of something he sees, and that has a local association with him.

He really wants to have a good look at it and to reassure himself. While this is going on in his mind he suddenly feels the pain of the blow from the stick. The consequence is, that he now associates the spot not only with the suspicious object, but with punishment. The habit, far from being cured, is merely being perpetuated.

The right way to deal with the problem is, firstly, to speak to him in a friendly and not a boisterous way. The next thing is to apply a very strong pressure of the far side leg and rein so as to endeavour to keep the horse straight in the direction he should be going.

We often see the reverse. We see the rider pulling the horse's head in towards the object, so that he is quickly moving sideways like a crab, which in these days of motors and slippery roads is highly dangerous.

It is in circumstances such as these that the horse wants encouragement, not punishment, and the friendly guiding pressure of the man's legs against his sides to reassure him, and to help him "his nerves and finer fibres brace."

Xenophon (440 B.C.) says: "When your horse shies at an object he should be shown that there is nothing fearful in it, least of all to a courageous horse like him. Compulsion and blows inspire only the more fear, for when horses are at all hurt at such a time they think that what they shied at is the cause of the hurt."

XXIV

SHOW JUMPING

With a head like a snake, and a skin like a mouse,
An eye like a woman, bright, gentle, and brown,
With loins and back that would carry a house,
And quarters to lift him smack over a town.

AS a spectacle, jumping in the Show Ring always attracts an interested crowd of spectators ; but, unlike other exhibitions, improvement and progress from year to year do not seem to be as evident as those interested in horsemanship would like. Show Jumping is, to-day, rightly looked down upon by hunting people as being unsuited to the training of a hunter for cross-country work, and the competitors are restricted in consequence to those who specialise in this branch of equitation. Horses are schooled more with the view of getting over the fences in the somewhat unnatural manner of touching nothing, rather than in the more finished way of developing their jumping capacities to the utmost on natural lines. This is due to the principle of "lathe" jumping, which I will refer to later.

The courses vary but little. They consist of about six fences only, of which a brush, a gate, a wall, perhaps an "in and out," a triple bar, and the water, are the usual lay-out.

On the Continent, where exhibition jumping has been developed into a national sport, things are very different, and the interest evoked is far greater than in this country, for it produces magnificent cross-country horses, which, as soon as they had become accustomed to the circumstances of English hunting, would show the way to most of our own horses, even the best. The executive committees of local horse shows are, in my opinion, handicapped by the regulations at present imposed by the Show Jumping Association. For instance, the water jump is regarded as so important that one is recommended for every course, and when a tie has to be run off, the water

jump has to be included. This jump, it must be remembered, is not a natural open piece of water such as is met in a day's hunting, but has an absurd low hedge in front of it. This gives an artificiality to the obstacle which is, I think, not in the best interests of the schooling of horses.

This form of water jump is, I understand, preferred chiefly on account of its supposedly spectacular nature. But the view is one which I find difficult to reconcile with facts.

In the first place, the spectacular effect is confined only to those comparatively few people whose view is unhampered by either distance or angle. For the remainder, it is the least interesting of all.

In the second place, the water jump has to be well winged (unnatural enough in itself), which prevents even those who might get a fair view from seeing anything at all.

From the sensational aspect, I fear those who look forward to the occasional immersion of a competitor are doomed to constant disappointment, even if they were in a position to get a clear view of so gratifying a spectacle. All that usually happens is a slight splash as a horse drops his hind-legs, and if that produces a thrill, even among the most juvenile of onlookers, they must be more bucolic and easily pleased than is generally believed of the present generation.

If a sensational jump is needed to wind up with, surely it requires but little ingenuity to produce something much more exciting.

So much for the spectacular side. If we look at it from the point of view of horsemanship or of training, it has still less to recommend it. It requires no skill. The horse is urged forward at the top of its speed under a plentiful application of heel and whip, which is neither elegant nor entertaining.

Many a well-schooled horse has lost a prize which he has earned for making a pardonable fault at this often slippery or even muddy jump, which an unschooled four-year-old could clear if chances favoured.

The most attractive part of schooling a horse to jump is to get him temperate, and to teach him to jump with a combination of collection and impetus. It is difficult to understand why this special

and unnatural kind of obstacle should be forced upon local committees.

We must also consider the committees' point of view. Few courses have a natural ditch or water-course in them, and at considerable trouble the ground has to be prepared and made with a shelving bottom (so that accident shall be avoided), and the water in it has to be conserved in water-proof sheets or banked with clay. The landing has to be carefully prepared so as not to allow it to get too boggy, and the water has to be brought in water-carts. The fence in front makes it still more unnatural, and wings of special length and impenetrability have to be erected.

So much for the water jump.

The Lathe.—The continuance of the "lathe" is, in my opinion, a great pity. It has been abolished on the Continent (from whence it originated) for many years, and the International Horse Show at Olympia, who do not jump under the N.S.J. Association rules, have given it up for some time.

Some people believe that by abolishing the "lathe" ties would become too common, but this point of view does not stand examination.

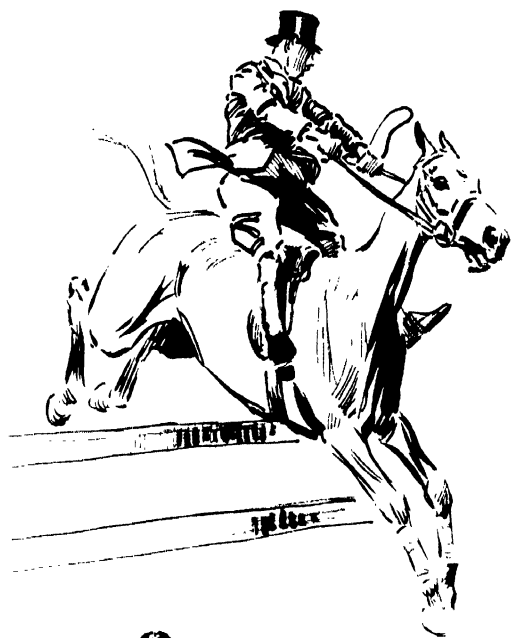
The simplest plan to eliminate ties is to increase the height of the jumps whenever necessary. But, it may be suggested, since the present system has worked satisfactorily for so many years, why make a change? The answer to this question is important.

In the first place, to judge the jumping capacity of a horse by the misplacing of a "lathe" is a wrong assessment of his ability.

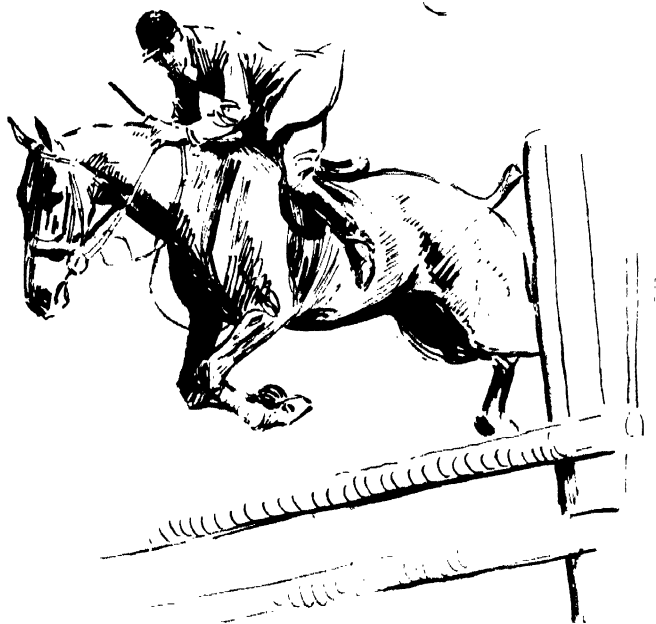
Horses, like dogs, are apt, even when perfectly schooled, to touch the obstacle. This is no fault. A horse should be allowed to "tip" a fence. It is only when he raps it that he should be penalised. On the Continent the rails fall only to a distinct rap, such as would be serious if the obstacle were solid, and are so built as to withstand a mere tap.

This system gives opportunity for the naturally schooled horse in distinction to the "trick jumper" who has been taught to jump incorrectly by that very objectionable practice of "rapping."

PLATE XXV.



THE AMATEUR:
TOO FAR BACK.



THE PROFESSIONAL:
TOO FAR FORWARD.

That this should be necessary is in itself sufficient condemnation of "lathe-marking" without further comment. The National Show Jumping Association have already done a great deal of good work, but there is much more to be done. The most successful show of the year is the International Horse Show, which does attract a large number of people; but, as I have already mentioned, the jumping is not under National Show Jumping rules. Why, therefore, should not the Association consider the amendment of their rules for the good of training, the good of horsemanship, and for the popularity it would arouse? Twenty thousand spectators come annually to see the great event in Rome. The King, the Duce, and every notable in Italy attend, and the prizewinners are cheered to the echo.

Also in Berlin, where a fortnight's show is held, 25,000 horses compete for £30,000 prize money—and 30,000 people are drawn to every performance. There are 600 shows held annually in various towns in Germany.

Similar enthusiasm all over the Continent is found, and the fact that so comparatively little interest exists in this country shows that there is something lacking.

If I may, therefore, make a few suggestions to them, in an entirely friendly spirit, I would like to submit for the National Show Jumping Association's consideration a plan on such lines as these:

They should organise a meeting at least once a year (at the Royal, perhaps), at which prizes of considerable value should be offered. The course should be the last word in modernism, and the best and latest tips from the Continent should be embodied in the making of it. They should also issue rules abolishing the lathe, set their faces against wings (which should be unnecessary, and obscure the view), and stop their predilection for the water jump. If, also, they will inform local committees that furze is not only not the best material for fences, but is also unfair to horses, they would in one day do more for horsemanship in England than they have already done in their long and useful existence.

I do not, however, put much faith in my powers to convince the older generation; but I have great hopes in the younger. Boys and

girls to-day, who have keenly competed in their local gymkhanas, will not be prepared to accept indefinitely the old-fashioned ideas of their fathers and grandparents. They will soon force the pace for themselves, even though I may not be able to succeed in my lifetime.

On the Continent, unlike our own competitions, the best and most valuable horses are entered. And the reason why these events are so popular is because they do test the jumping capacity of the horses to the full. With us, amongst our competitors it is rare to see the genuine hunter, the horses are usually trained to Show Jumping only, and spend their lives going from show to show.

How much better it would be if each Show Jumping competition was one in which all the best horses in the local hunting field could take part with good chance of success.

I believe that this cannot be brought about until the fences are made up on the lines of the Continent. There it is rare to see the plain thin or up-and-down jump, such as the gate—they have fences of breadth. As I have said, they do not mind whether a horse just touches the top rail; he is given full marks provided that he clears the obstacle without dislodging it. And this is the whole point.

With us the show jumper has to jump his gate without touching it at all for fear that he might knock down the lathe. And until he has been schooled to this unnatural form of jumping, the hunter does not have a chance.

In my opinion the test of a hunter should be his capacity to win a Show Jumping competition, and he would certainly be able to do so if our shows were run on Continental lines.

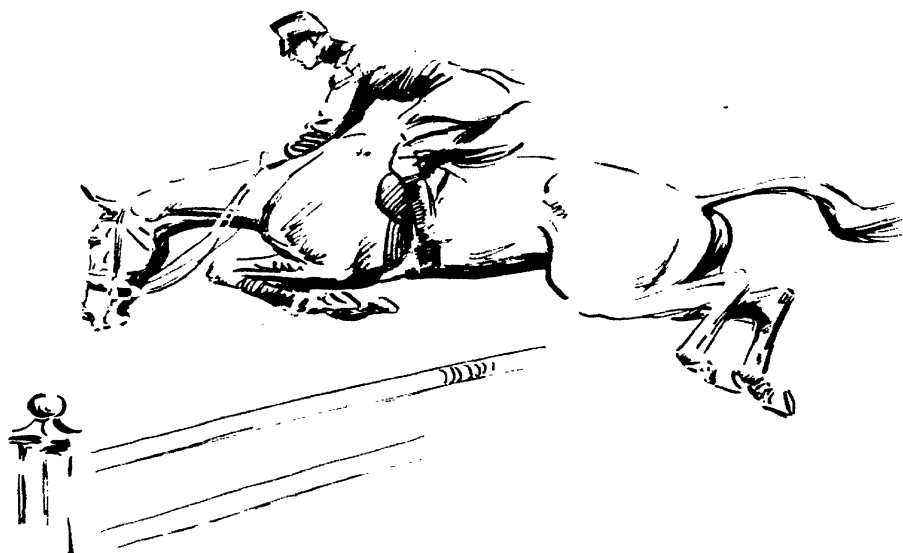
The value of jumping horses over breadth has not been sufficiently realised in this country. It gives them wonderful scope, and makes them thoroughly capable cross-country performers.

With such fences they have to land well out into the next field, in contrast to the horse who, by screwing himself over, can clear a gate without fault, but lands only a few feet on the other side.

This is a feat which may sometimes get the applause of the gallery, but in any hunting country would spell disaster.

If you want sensation it has to be found on the Continent, where

PLATE XXVI.



A GOOD SEAT, BUT "CONTACT" LOST.

the fences are vastly bigger than anything we have experienced in this country. An oxer over 6 feet 6 inches in height and 6 feet 6 inches in breadth makes our little triple bars look rather small. Take the water jump of $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet with three rails in front of it over 5 feet high. What English show jumper would face a fence like this?

Therefore let us try to make our courses practical tests for cross-country work, and let us cease to continue this artificial system to which we have too long been addicted.

XXV

INSTRUCTION

For never man had friend
More enduring to the end,
Truer mate in every turn of time and tide.

IT is not so many years ago that the riding school in the Army was dreaded by recruits, and not without some justification.

The rough-riding sergeant would stand in the centre of the school with a long whip. His tongue was never silent, the whip was seldom still.

The recruits had to trot round and round the school for long periods without stirrups, without saddles, or without reins, and when they fell off, as they often did, it was an occasion for ridicule or abuse. The recruits suffered from chafes and boils and sprains, and, of course, stiffness. Absentees were so numerous that nine months *was considered quick to get dismissal, and the course often spread to double that time.*

Even Lord Pembroke in his day laid it down that "he never should be made to trot till he is quite easy at the walk, and then on very easy horses at first," and, "'Tis necessary that the greatest attention and the same gentleness that is used in teaching horses be observed likewise in teaching the men."

Needless to say, the old system was the very antithesis of good teaching, and it is a matter of congratulation that this method is now a thing of the past.

We do not want to make pupils either frightened or nervous. We do not want to show them how difficult horsemanship is, but how easy.

We do not want to ask them to do things we hate

selves, but to do those exercises which are simple and readily accomplished.

The essence of good instruction is to instil confidence. We cannot get that unless we demand easy tasks at first.

We must remember that a pupil's muscles are undeveloped, and the whole position is strange.

Confidence can only be attained by slow degrees.

In every other branch of study a start is made with easy lessons, and it has always been a mystery why riding should be the exception.

We, as experienced riders, all know how uncomfortable it is to ride without stirrups.

How we hate to ride on a numnah, and how difficult we find it if we drop the reins and cross our arms. And yet many instructors have no qualms about asking their pupils to do these particularly unpleasant exercises.

The reasons that are given are three.

The first is that it is essential to develop the riding muscles.

To this the answer is : Yes. We want to work up those muscles, but the result can be better attained by teaching the pupil simple exercises at a walk, such as the half-passage, right shoulder in, etc., which develop the riding muscles splendidly, without the discomfort and the falls the other method necessitates.

The second is that by this means the pupil is got "down in his saddle."

The meaning of this statement is rather obscure, but what gets a rider to look well in his saddle quickest is the growth of the confidence which inspires the requisite freedom and suppleness.

The third is, that it teaches a pupil to be independent of the reins, and so saves jabbing a horse in the mouth when jumping.

The reply to this is very simple. The reason why a pupil jabs a horse when jumping is because he is off his balance.

If the instructor would only consider the importance of this more and work at it, he would find the habit of pulling at the horse with the reins would automatically cease. So let us reconsider this form of teaching, and see if we cannot obtain better results in a

much simpler and pleasanter way. We are not all in a position to get hold of a wooden horse. But we can usually find a very quiet cob, which will do almost as well.

The first three lessons, at least, should be upon this form of mount. There is a great deal to teach, and the time will be fully occupied.

For example : Mounting, dismounting ; how to hold the reins ; the correct position in the saddle ; the length of the stirrup ; how to alter the length of the stirrup leather from the saddle ; how to tighten the girths ; to know how a saddle should fit ; the names and parts of both horse and saddlery ; how to handle a horse in the stable ; how to bring a horse to the door ; and so on.

These points will take at least three lessons before the pupil is ready to be seen on a real horse at all.

During this time, it must be remembered, the pupil is gaining confidence.

We must realise that the very fact of being astride a horse is a novel experience, and that, also, even the act of sitting in a saddle is using muscles that have never been used before.

In the early stages we cannot be too careful or too thoughtful.

After the wooden horse stage is over, the pupil can be allowed to get on to a live horse, and to perform exercises at a walk.

Here again a whole series of exercises should be practised. Trotting should not be contemplated.

After the pupil's seat and hands have been checked and corrected, the muscles of the legs should be worked up by attempting the various turns. By trying the turn on the hocks, the centre and the forehand ; by riding to a point ; by making square turns at the corners of the *manège* or school ; by reining back ; by mounting and dismounting ; by learning neck-reining, half-passage, and so on.

In this way we can bring the pupil on very well indeed. Confidence and muscle are increasing daily. Chafes, sprains, and stiffness become unknown.

After these things have been done for some few lessons the trot can be practised. If we take the same care over the turns at this

pace, and work up the pupil's muscles by simple exercises, such as the half-passage (if the horse understands these things), we shall be laying good foundations for the future.

The next stage is the canter. Here there is so much to teach ; it becomes a question of the ability of the pupil, the capacity of the horse, and the circumstances under which the instruction is being conducted, that no hard or fast rules can be suggested.

Neither is it the intention in this chapter to go into details, but only to outline the general principles upon which good instruction can be framed.

After the pupil can canter his horse collectedly, an attempt should be made to teach jumping.

Directly the pupil is able to obtain control at this pace, the sooner the leap is started the better.

Some instructors say that unless a horse has something to jump it is impossible to get any results, and, in consequence, the unhappy tyro sees ominous bars and other unpleasant-looking tackle brought into the school. All this is somewhat alarming, and it is unnecessary.

There is a very great deal to teach when the bar is only lying on the ground. The method of approach, the position of the body, and particularly the hands during the imaginary leap, the collection after the passage of the obstacle, and so on, all demand much demonstration and practice before the pupil is ready to jump the rail only one foot from the ground.

And by teaching riding in this way we achieve two great points : we get the fundamentals right, and we never strain the pupil's confidence.

The result is extremely successful.

We find that riding can be taught more efficiently in about half the time, or even less, than by the old systems.

Not only that, but it is simplicity itself. We need waste no time on any fancy work ; no patent straps are required, no tedious exercises, no expensive appliances, just simply—simplicity.

I therefore commend these principles to those who have pupils under their charge for their careful consideration.

I only ask them to ask themselves :

Do I like to trot round a riding-school without stirrups or reins?
When did I do so last?

If I can ride reasonably well without these exercises, is it not logical to suppose my pupils can be taught to do so too?

I also ask them to remember that an ounce of confidence is worth a pound of falls.

Falling is all very well when we are fairly expert, but when “in statu pupilarum”—no.

Pupils should also never be allowed to use spurs.

In this respect Baucher says :

“ If I myself obtained with a sharp spur all the different airs of the high school, I could not hide from myself the fact that the result was not always the same with my pupils, many of whom made their horses restive. Accordingly I tried spurs with smooth-edged rowels, and obtained such excellent results, that I definitely adopted them.”

I submit that if he had tried without spurs at all he would have had still better results. But in those days a rider without some kind of spur was unknown—and he was advanced for his day.

XXVI

CONCLUSION

A good horse should have three propyrtees of a man, three of a woman, three of a foxe, three of a haare, and three of an asse.

Of a man : Bolde, prowde and hardye.

Of a woman : Fayre breasted, fair of hair, and easy to move.

Of a foxe : A fair taylle, short ears, with a good trotte.

Of a haare : A grate eye, a dry head, and well rennynge.

Of an asse : A bygge chynn, a flat legge, and a good hoof.

WYNNYN DE WORDE (1496).

IN this brief survey of riding and of horse management, my endeavour has been to present the chief difficulties in as simple a manner as possible. My object has also been the avoidance of matter which can be found, far better expressed, in many other books, and I have tried to bring out points which do not appear elsewhere at all.

Details of stable management have been written about and discussed for generations, and did I attempt the task, I should have nothing new to bring to notice.

Balance and sympathy are my keynotes throughout, and if I have helped any reader in however small a degree to a better understanding of these two main points in the art of horsemanship, I shall be well rewarded.

It is sometimes said that the principles of horsemanship advocated in these chapters may be all very well for highly-schooled horses, or for valuable hunters who have good shoulders, scope, and courage, as well as a sound fundamental training, but they won't suit the particular animal that a particular reader rides.

I have heard this said more than once, but if we have established a fundamental rule of horsemanship which is sound, nothing can

shake it, no matter what feats we attempt, or upon what class of animal. It does not matter whether it be the waler, the country-bred, the Arab, the Chinese pony, the thoroughbred, or the hackney, those fundamental laws will always obtain.

Not only that, but the handling and teaching should differ but slightly with all the various breeds.

The principles are there ; the variance is a matter of degree alone.

It has been said in recent years that steeplechase jockeys fall much more than they used to. I have no means of verifying such a statement. I think this is probably true because of their short stirrups and the practice of shoving their feet forward as they land. But if people believe that their falls are due to them sitting more forward it can only be on account of the foregoing errors and not because they are attempting to improve their balance on modern lines.

In steeplechasing, the leather must undoubtedly be short, but there are limits to this, as I hope I have been able to demonstrate in the foregoing chapters of this book.

No one who understands the meaning of the forward (or balanced) seat would suggest that it is likely to cause more falls or would ever return to the old method. It has been adopted in America for years.

No one would be foolish enough to suggest that falls will never occur when this seat is adopted, but what its advocates do say is that falls will be fewer, control will be greater, more freedom is given to the horse, and more ground is gained after landing than in the old way.

But in steeplechasing we should remember that it is very difficult to keep forward always. In fact, owing to the various circumstances that are constantly cropping up when racing, we must be left behind, or even have to throw our bodies back sometimes.

But no one who understands could ever say that the endeavour to maintain a balanced seat could cause falls.

The test of all riding is the "unexpected." Most of us can look well enough on a horse provided nothing untoward is occurring.

But when the "unexpected" happens, such as the sudden shy, a bad "take-off," or an early morning buck, then the faults of position are instantly displayed.

Few of us are confident enough to stand the click of the press photographer's camera when jumping a simple fence. But if this is how we feel, our standard is too low. We should be sufficiently masters of ourselves to face publicity with equanimity under all normal circumstances. The reason why we are not confident is because our balance is not good enough.

Wherever we see the best riding, we find that, perhaps quite unwittingly, the rider is adopting the principles of balance which have been submitted in this book.

In a Rodeo Exhibition which took place in London a few years ago it was very interesting to see both men and women—who were sitting their horses under extremely difficult conditions—adopting this form of seat, not because they had necessarily studied it scientifically, but because, in order to stick on, it was unavoidable.

The camera should be very useful to us, and the more we are photographed the better, because it helps us "to see ourselves as others see us." It lays bare our faults, and gives us food for reflection. We so often think we were riding well, until we see the proofs.

It comes to us as a bit of a shock, no doubt. But these little surprises are good for the soul. They keep us modest, and spur our resolution to improve.

Many people, however, are not able to criticise accurately the position in the saddle. We often see pictures proudly displayed which should be kept locked away. Photographs of terrible faults in posture are even framed and hung about the walls for the admiration of friends.

The fact is that there is no central authority to which appeal can be made for a ruling on what is right or wrong. If we ask advice, some people will tell us this, some that. Some say the foot should be pushed a little forward, some that it should be back. Some say it is necessary to lean backwards when jumping a fence, some that

the body should be forward. Some tell you that the stirrups should be long, and others that they should be short.

But few give reasons to justify their contentions or to appeal to common sense.

It is in consequence of this that an institute of equitation is badly wanted—some central school where riding can be taught on sound up-to-date lines, supported by the leading authorities of the day; a civilian “cavalry school,” in fact, where the instruction would be first-class, and suitable for pupils of every kind; not only for beginners, but for those who are more experienced, and for the teaching of the highest branches of equitation as exemplified in *haute école*, for those who desire it.

If the school had also a club-room, where lectures could be given, and discussion raised, where the exact movements of a horse could be shown on the screen, where a library would enable members to refer to past experience, it would be filling a long-felt want.

The Institute of the Horse, of which I am happy to say I was the founder, is doing very good work. The establishment of Pony Clubs has done a great deal already for the horsemanship of young riders, and it is the earnest wish of all to see these and other activities increasing year by year.

APPENDICES

I.—TECHNOLOGY

Round-hoof'd, short jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong;
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide.

A KNOWLEDGE of sporting terms is very essential to all sportsmen, but they are not always easy to come by. We often hesitate to show our ignorance, and few books (if any) help us in all branches of horse vocabulary. Here and there we pick up words, but where can we find them all together?

So in this chapter we are going to try to bridge this difficulty. We cannot actually create a sporting dictionary, or a guide to knowledge, but we can pick out some of the most technical expressions, with a view of helping those who are not very experienced, and of amusing those who are.

We will, therefore, start with the simple description of a horse. These are the chief colours. There are others, too, as owners of country-breds in India know, and rare ones like "mouse" are occasionally cropping up, but these will do for all ordinary purposes :

Bay.	Skewbald.
Brown.	Sorrel.
	Dun.
Black { Liver.	
Chestnut { Bright.	
{ Washy.	Roan { Red.
	{ Blue.
	{ Strawberry.
Grey { Fleabitten.	White.
{ Dappled.	
{ Iron.	
Piebald.	Cream.

When you aren't sure what the colour is, look at the muzzle. That is always accepted as the standard, because the hair is

always the same on that spot. On other parts of the body the colour is always changing. For instance, a brown horse will look quite black when he has his winter coat.

Now, next come the descriptive marks. They are :

Star.	Race.	Blaze.
Snip.	Stockings.	Socks.
	Wall eye.	Lop ears.

Markings.—Saddle, collar, trace, etc. (so-called because rubs always leave permanent white hairs).

The Parts of the Body.—We needn't put down the simple ones like head, neck, etc., but only those which are not the same as a man's body.

They are :

Cannon-bone.	Croup.
Fetlock.	Wither.
Pastern.	Tush.
Hoof {	Forelock.
	Poll.
	Rump.
	Buttocks.
Gaskin.	Quarters.
Mane.	Cheshunts (or chestnuts).
Tail.	Stifle.

Then there are all sorts of expressions over and above these which are in daily use.

Here are a few, but there are lots more :

Off side.	Near side.
Standing over.	On the leg.
Herring gutted.	Tied in below the knee.
Flat sided.	Short of bone.
Goose rumped.	Hairy heeled.
Fiddle headed.	A commoner.

Roach backed.	Feather.
Cow hocked.	Star gazing.
Sickle hocked.	A nutcracker
Ewe necked.	A refuser.
Calf kneed.	Nappy.
Grunts under the stick.	Yawing.
Dishing.	Good frontispiece.
Peacocky.	Good rein.
Brushing.	Lots in front of you.
Good mover.	Straight shouldered.
Tied in action.	Nothing in front.
A good doer.	A cold back.
Split up.	Bridling.
Long tailed horses.	Short of a rib.
Cock tailed.	Tucked up.
Roman nosed.	Parrot jawed.
High blower.	Well ribbed up.

Then we come to the stable.

STABLE.

Grooming :

Body brush.	Curry comb.	Drenching horn.
Dandy brush.	Rubber.	Sieve.
Water brush.	Hoof pick.	Singeing lamp.
Scraper.	Wisp.	

Clothing :

Day rug.	Quarter sheets.	Bandages.
Night rug.	Summer rugs.	Tail cover.
Pad.	Fly nets.	Boots.
Roller.	Fringe.	Knee caps.
	Hood.	

Stable :

Loose-box.
Stall.

Pillar chains.
Rack.

Manger.
Short rack.

Forage :

Meadow hay.
Seeds hay.
Oats.

Bran.
Linseed.
Wheat straw.

Oaten straw
Peat moss.
Sawdust.

Habits :

Crib biting.

Wind sucking.

Weaving.

SADDLERY.

Bridle :

Brow band.
Nose band.

Cheek pieces.
Throat lash.

Lip strap.

Bit :

Port { high.
low.
Cannons.

Cheeks.
Bit or curb.
Hooks.

Snaffle.
Curb chain.

Martingale :

Running. }
Standing. }
Irish. }

with

{ Neck strap.
Stops.
Rings.

Saddle :

Tree.
Pommel.
Cantle.
Surcingle.

Flap.
Sweat flap.
Girth straps.
Numnah.

Dees.
Spring bars and
safety catch.

Or shoeing. Do you know all these ?

Fullering.
Calking.
Racing plates.

Clinches.
Roughing.
Concave shoe.

Seated shoe.
Frost cogs.
Feather edged shoe.

Perhaps you have found those quite easy ; how about harness ?

Collar.	Terrets.
Hames and hame strap.	Kidney link.
Traces.	Pole chains.
Check strap.	Bearing rein.
Belly band.	Tugs.
Coupling reins.	Blinkers.
Back band.	Kicking strap.
Crupper.	Drops.
Breeching.	

Or the parts of your clothing and equipment ?

Boots {	top.	Crop {	thong.
	jack.		lash.
	butcher.		keeper.
	polo.		gate stop.
	or riding.		hook.
— with {	garters.		jagging.
	stops.		the stock.
	or loops.		boss.
—to keep things in place.			neck.
{	jockeys.	Spurs {	rowels.
	or boot hooks.		stud and buckle.
—to pull them on,			loop end.
—and Boot Jack.			shaped }
—to take them off.			straight } sides.
			Sandwich case.
			Canteen.
			Holster flask.
			Hat guard.
			Woollies (for wet weather).

The horn {
ferule.
mouthpiece.
bell.

The common ailments of a horse :

Laminitis.	Sand colic.
Navicular.	Round joints.
Ringbone (upper and lower).	Broken wind.
Side bones.	Whistler.
Thrush.	Roarer.
Seedy toe.	Grunting.
Sand crack.	Warts.
Thoroughpins.	Warbles.
Bog spavin.	Botts.
Spavin.	Sprained suspensory ligament.
Curbs.	Sprained check ligament.
Fistula.	Bowed sinew.
Pink eye.	Corns.
Glanders.	Capped elbow (or hock).
Farcy.	Quittor.
Anthrax.	Canker.
Sesamoiditis.	Overreach.
Splints.	Cracked heels.
Split pastern.	Brushing.
Colic.	Stringhalt.
Windgalls.	Speedy cut.

The common expressions in the hunting field :

HUNTING FIELD.

The Fox :

Mask.	A vixen.	A leash of foxes.
Brush.	A dog fox.	Cubs.
Pads.	A brace of foxes.	An earth.

The Hound :

A couple of hounds.
The dog pack.
Mixed pack.
Bitch pack.
Running heel.

Running mute.
Riot.
Feathering.
Carrying a good head.

Huntsman's Vernacular :

Hoick.
Wind him.
Tally ho !
View halloa.
Loo in.

Hark to—Venger, etc.
Yoi over.
'Ware riot.
Hark forrard away.
Owning a scent.

The Hunt :

A check.
Casting.
Lifting hounds.
A throw-up.
Breast-high scent.
Run to ground.

The find.
To change foxes.
The kill or the death.
To chop a fox.
A sinking fox.
To blow out of cover.

The Country :

A bullfinch.
A stake and bound.
Post and rails.
A double.
An in and out.
A drop fence.
A ditch to (or from) you.

A ride.
A headland.
Ridge and furrow.
'Ware seeds, roots, wire,
etc.
A wattle.
A bottom.

Miscellaneous :

Second horsemen.	Blooding.
Capping.	Earth stopping.
A runner.	Field master.
A whipper-in { first.	The huntsman.
second.	To walk a puppy.

Stag-hunting :

A yeld.	All his rights.
A warrantable deer.	Brow.
A runnable stag.	Bay.
Single.	Tray.
Slot.	Soiling pit.
Take soil.	Break soil.
Velvet.	Tufts.
Harbourer.	To rouse a stag.
To blanch.	To break bay.
Belling and rutting.	To cage.

Harriers :

Scut.	Leveret.	Puss.
Form.	Pads.	Jack-hare.

Now, should there be any words amongst this brief list that you don't know, never be afraid to ask. All good sportsmen are delighted to give their best information to anyone who is anxious to learn, but the one way to remain in ignorance always is to affect a knowledge which is not possessed, and to suffer from that little failing *mauvaise honte*.

II.—THE AIDS

(The directions given are for the right rein only. The same rules apply conversely for the left rein.)

To Collect.—Bring the hind quarters underneath by a pressure of both legs, and cause the horse to flex by an equal feeling of both reins.

Walk.—Close both legs and ease both reins slightly.

Halt.—Close both legs and then feel both reins, leaning the body slightly back.

Right Turn—on the Hock.—Collect, and lead the forehand round with the right rein, supported by the left rein against the neck; close the left leg strongly (slightly advanced), and steady the haunches by a pressure of the right leg (slightly drawn back).

On the Centre.—A pressure of right rein and right leg.

On the Forehand.—A pressure of the right leg and the right rein.

Rein Back.—Collect, and feel both reins, and lean the body slightly back. When the horse answers lean slightly forward.

Canter (Off Fore).—Collect, bend the horse's head slightly to the left, lean the body back and to the left. Strong pressure of left leg, slightly back. When completed, change the bend to the right.

Change (from Off Fore to Near Fore).—Bend to the right; strong pressure of right leg (slightly back); lean the body slightly back and to the right.

Right Shoulder In.—Collect; turn the forehand to centre with right rein and left leg, till 45 degrees away from side of enclosure; then change the hand to the left and apply strong pressure of right leg, slightly back.

Right Half-pass.—Bend to the right and apply strong pressure of left leg, slightly back, keeping the horse's body straight from nose to croup.

Right Pass.—An increase of right half-pass, and stronger pressure on the reins.

III.—TERMS

Right Diagonal.—The rider sinking (at the trot) as the off fore, near hind touch the ground.

Right Rein.—A sufficient pressure of the right rein, so that the rider can just see the horse's right eye.

Canter True.—Off fore, off hind, followed by near fore, near hind.

Disunited.—Off fore, near hind, followed by near fore, off hind.

Balanced.—When a horse has his weight equally distributed on all four feet.

Collected.—When a horse is flexed, with his hocks well under him, ready to obey.

IV.—SADDLERY FITTING

The saddle should be placed so that the girths lie about 4 inches behind the elbow. The arch of pommel must be well clear of the wither. Care should be taken that the sweat flap lies true on the horse's side.

The girth should only be tight enough to keep the saddle in its place. It should be tightened gradually, without wrinkling the skin.

It should be so fitted that the buckles fit into the second or third hole from the free end, so as to allow for easy subsequent adjustment.

The snaffle should touch the corners of the mouth without wrinkling them.

The curb should be so placed as to be just above the tusk (or 1 inch above the corner tooth in a mare). Care should be taken to see that it is not too narrow for the mouth.

The curb-chain should lie smoothly along the chin groove.

The first link, adjusted with the thumb downwards, should be

put on the hook first, then the correct link fixed with the thumb also downwards, but it is a better plan to have the chain so shortened that there are no spare links.

Provided the chain rests in the proper chin groove, a tight chain is preferable to a loose one.

The noseband should lie two fingers' breadth below the projecting portion of the cheek-bone, and admit of two fingers between it and the nose.

The throatlash should fit loosely, but sufficiently tight to prevent the bridle from slipping off over the horse's ears.

A *breastplate* is useless and should never be worn. If the saddle slips back, a string girth will be found effective.

A *standing martingale* should be of sufficient length to allow freedom for all normal movement, and to check the abnormal.

Running martingales.—Not to be recommended, but, if used, should be placed on the curb-rein. "Stops" may have to be fitted to prevent its rings getting over the rings of the cheek-piece.

V.—HUNTING CALLS

I am indebted to an article by Lord Charles Bentinck in the *Field* for the following hunting horn calls :

Drawing cover	—————
Fox on foot	o o o o o o
When going away }	o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o
The kill and worry }	
To ground	- - - - - - - - -
Blowing out of cover	—————
All on	- o
'Ware riot or heel	^
Home	~~~~~ ~~~~~

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